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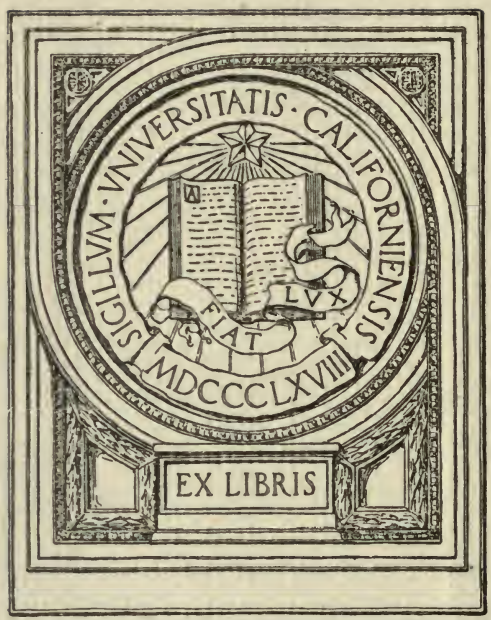
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THE MARRYING OF ANN LEETE

A COMEDY, IN FOUR ACTS,

BY GRANVILLE BARKER

BOSTON
LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY
1916

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Published, February, 1916

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Printers
S. J. PARKHILL & CO., BOSTON, U.S.A.

To the memory of my fellow-worker,

St. John Hankin.

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The Marrying of Ann Leete

A COMEDY

1899

THE MARRYING OF ANN LEETE

The first three acts of the comedy pass in the garden at Markswayde, MR. CARNABY LEETE'S *house near Reading, during a summer day towards the close of the eighteenth century: the first act at four in the morning, the second shortly after mid-day, the third near to sunset. The fourth act takes place one day in the following winter; the first scene in the hall at Markswayde, the second scene in a cottage some ten miles off.*

This part of the Markswayde garden looks to have been laid out during the seventeenth century. In the middle a fountain; the centrepiece the figure of a nymph, now somewhat cracked, and pouring nothing from the amphora; the rim of the fountain is high enough and broad enough to be a comfortable seat.

The close turf around is in parts worn bare. This plot of ground is surrounded by a terrace three feet higher. Three sides of it are seen. From two corners broad steps lead down; stone urns stand at the bottom and top of the stone balustrades. The other two corners are rounded convexly into broad stone seats.

Along the edges of the terrace are growing rose trees, close together; behind these, paths; behind those, shrubs and trees. No landscape is to be seen. A big copper beech overshadows the seat on the left. A silver birch droops over the seat on the right. The trees far to the left indicate an orchard, the few to the right are more of the garden sort. It is the height of summer, and after a long drought the rose trees are dilapidated.

It is very dark in the garden. Though there may be by now a faint morning light in the sky, it has not penetrated yet among these trees. It is very still, too. Now and then the leaves of a tree are stirred, as if in its sleep; that is all. Suddenly a shrill, frightened, but not tragical, scream is heard. After a moment ANN LEETE *runs quickly down the steps and on to the fountain, where she stops, panting.* LORD JOHN CARP *follows her, but only to the top of the steps, evidently not knowing his way.* ANN *is a girl of twenty; he an English gentleman, nearer forty than thirty.*

LORD JOHN. I apologise.

ANN. Why is it so dark?

LORD JOHN. Can you hear what I'm saying?

ANN. Yes.

LORD JOHN. I apologise for having kissed you . . . almost unintentionally.

ANN. Thank you. Mind the steps down.

LORD JOHN. I hope I'm sober, but the air . . .

ANN. Shall we sit for a minute? There are several seats to sit on, somewhere.

LORD JOHN. This is a very dark garden.

There is a slight pause.

ANN. You've won your bet.

LORD JOHN. So you did scream!

ANN. But it wasn't fair.

LORD JOHN. Don't reproach me.

ANN. Somebody's coming.

LORD JOHN. How d'you know?

ANN. I can h e a r somebody coming.

LORD JOHN. We're not sitting down.

ANN'S *brother,* GEORGE LEETE, *comes to the top of the steps, and afterwards down them. Rather an old young man.*

GEORGE. Ann!

ANN. Yes.

GEORGE. My lord!

LORD JOHN. Here.

GEORGE. I can't see you. I'm sent to say we're all anxious to know what ghost or other bird of night or beast has frightened Ann to screaming point, and won you . . . the best in Tatton's stables—so he says now. He's quite annoyed.

LORD JOHN. The mare is a very good mare.

ANN. He betted it because he wanted to bet it; I didn't want him to bet it.

GEORGE. What frightened her?

ANN. I had rather, my lord, that you did not tell my brother why I screamed.

LORD JOHN. I kissed her.

GEORGE. Did you?

ANN. I had rather, Lord John, that you had not told my brother why I screamed.

LORD JOHN. I misunderstood you.

GEORGE. I've broke up the whist party. Ann, shall we return?

LORD JOHN. She's not here.

GEORGE. Ann!

LADY COTTESHAM, ANN'S *sister, and ten years older, and* MR. DANIEL TATTON, *a well-living, middle-aged country gentleman, arrive together.* TATTON *carries a double candlestick . . . the lights out.*

MR. TATTON. Three steps?

SARAH. No . . . four.

LORD JOHN. Miss Leete.

TATTON, *in the darkness, finds himself close to* GEORGE.

MR. TATTON. I am in a rage with you, my lord.

GEORGE. He lives next door.

MR. TATTON. My mistake. [*He passes on.*] Confess that she did it to please you.

LORD JOHN. Screamed!

MR. TATTON. Lost my bet. We'll say . . . won your bet . . to please you. Was skeered at the dark . . . oh, fie!

LORD JOHN. Miss Leete trod on a toad.

MR. TATTON. I barred toads . . . here.

LORD JOHN. I don't think it.

MR. TATTON. I barred toads. Did I forget to? Well . . . it's better to be a sportsman.

SARAH. And whereabouts is she?

ANN. [*From the corner she has slunk to.*] Here I am, Sally.

MR. TATTON. Miss Ann, I forgive you. I'm smiling, I assure you, I'm smiling.

SARAH. We all laughed when we heard you.

MR. TATTON. Which reminds me, young George Leete, had you the ace?

GEORGE. King . . . knave . . . here are the cards, but I can't see.

MR. TATTON. I had the king.

ANN. [*Quietly to her sister.*] He kissed me.

SARAH. A man would.

GEORGE. What were trumps?

MR. TATTON. What were we playing . . . cricket?

ANN. [*As quietly again.*] D'you think I'm blushing?

SARAH. It's probable.

ANN. I am by the feel of me.

SARAH. George, we left Papa sitting quite still.

LORD JOHN. Didn't he approve of the bet?

MR. TATTON. He said nothing.

SARAH. Why, who doesn't love sport!

MR. TATTON. I'm the man to grumble. Back a woman's

pluck again . . . never. My lord . . . you weren't the one to go with her as umpire.

GEORGE. No . . . to be sure.

MR. TATTON. How was it I let that pass? Playing two games at once. Haven't I cause of complaint? But a man must give and take.

The master of the house, father of GEORGE *and* SARAH COTTESHAM *and* ANN, MR. CARNABY LEETE, *comes slowly down the steps, unnoticed by the others. A man over fifty—à la Lord Chesterfield.*

GEORGE. [*To Lord John.*] Are you sure you're quite comfortable there?

LORD JOHN. Whatever I'm sitting on hasn't given way yet.

MR. TATTON. Don't forget that you're riding to Brighton with me.

LORD JOHN. To-morrow.

GEORGE. To-day. Well . . . the hour before sunrise is no time at all.

MR. TATTON. Sixty-five miles.

LORD JOHN. What are we all sitting here for?

MR. TATTON. I say people ought to be in bed and asleep.

CARNABY. But the morning air is delightful.

MR. TATTON. [*Jumping at the new voice.*] Leete! Now, had you the ace?

CARNABY. Of course.

MR. TATTON. We should have lost that, too, Lady Charlie.

SARAH. Bear up, Mr. Tat.

MR. TATTON. Come, a game of whist is a game of whist.

CARNABY. And so I strolled out after you all.

MR. TATTON. She trod on a toad.

CARNABY. [*Carelessly.*] Does she say so?

MR. TATTON. [*With mock roguishness.*] Ah!

GEORGE *is on the terrace, looking to the left through*

the trees. TATTON *is sitting on the edge of the fountain.*

GEORGE. Here's the sun . . . to show us ourselves.

MR. TATTON. Leete, this pond is full of water!

CARNABY. Ann, if you are there . . .

ANN. Yes, Papa.

CARNABY. Apologise profusely; it's your garden.

ANN. Oh . . .

CARNABY. Coat-tails, Tatton . . . or worse?

MR. TATTON. [*Ruefully discovering damp spots about him.*] Nothing vastly to matter.

LORD JOHN. Hardy, well-preserved country gentleman.

MR. TATTON. I bet I'm a younger man than you, my lord.

ANN. [*Suddenly to the company generally.*] I didn't tread upon any toad . . . I was kissed.

There is a pause of some discomfort.

SARAH. Ann, come here to me.

LORD JOHN. I apologised.

GEORGE. [*From the terrace.*] Are we to be insulted?

CARNABY. My dear Carp, say no more.

There is another short pause. By this it is twilight, faces can be plainly seen.

SARAH. Listen . . . the first bird.

MR. TATTON. Oh, dear no, they begin to sing long before this.

CARNABY. What is it now . . . a lark?

MR. TATTON. I don't know.

ANN. [*Quietly to* SARAH.] That's a thrush.

SARAH. [*Capping her.*] A thrush.

CARNABY. Charming.

MR. TATTON. [*To* LORD JOHN.] I don't see why you couldn't have told me how it was that she screamed.

CARNABY. Our dear Tatton! [*Sotto voce to his son.*] Hold your tongue, George.

MR. TATTON. I did bar toads, and you said I didn't; and anyway, I had a sort of right to know.

LORD JOHN. You know now.

SARAH. I wonder if this seat is dry?

LORD JOHN. There's been no rain for weeks.

SARAH. The roads will be dusty for you, Mr. Tat.

MR. TATTON. Just one moment. You don't mind me, Miss Ann, do you?

ANN. I don't mind much.

MR. TATTON. We said distinctly . . . To the orchard end of the garden and back, and if frightened—that's the word—so much as to scream . . . ! Now, what I want to know is . . .

LORD JOHN. Consider the bet off.

MR. TATTON. Certainly not. And we should have added . . . Alone.

CARNABY. Tatton has persistence.

SARAH. Mr. Tat, do you know where people go who take things seriously?

MR. TATTON. Miss Leete, were you frightened when Lord John kissed you?

GEORGE. Damnation!

CARNABY. My excellent Tatton, much as I admire your searchings after truth, I must here parentally intervene, regretting, my dear Tatton, that my own carelessness of duennahood has permitted this—this . . . to occur.

After this, there is silence for a minute.

LORD JOHN. Can I borrow a horse of you, Mr. Leete?

CARNABY. My entire stable; and your Ronald shall be physicked.

SARAH. Spartans that you are, to be riding!

LORD JOHN. I prefer it to a jolting chaise.

MR. TATTON. You will have my mare.

LORD JOHN. [*Ignoring him.*] This has been a most enjoyable three weeks.

CARNABY. Four.

LORD JOHN. Is it four?

CARNABY. We bow to the compliment. Our duty to his Grace.

LORD JOHN. When I see him.

GEORGE. To our dear cousin.

MR. TATTON. [*To* LADY COTTESHAM.] Sir Charles at Brighton?

SARAH. [*Not answering.*] To be sure . . . we did discover . . . our mother was second cousin . . . once removed to you.

CARNABY. If the prince will be there . . . he is in waiting.

LORD JOHN. Any message, Lady Cottesham? . . . since we speak out of session.

SARAH. I won't trust you.

CARNABY. Or trouble you while I still may frank a letter. But my son-in-law is a wretched correspondent. Do you admire men of small vices? They make admirable husbands though their wives will be grumbling—Silence, Sarah—but that's a good sign.

SARAH. Papa is a connoisseur of humanity.

ANN. [*To the company as before.*] No, Mr. Tatton, I wasn't frightened when Lord John . . . kissed me. I screamed because I was surprised, and I'm sorry I screamed.

SARAH. [*Quietly to* ANN.] My dear Ann, you're a fool.

ANN. [*Quietly to* SARAH.] I will speak sometimes.

SARAH. Sit down again.

Again an uncomfortable silence, a ludicrous air about it this time.

TATTON. Now, we'll say no more about that bet, but I was right.

LORD JOHN. Do you know, Mr. Tatton, that I have a temper to lose?

MR. TATTON. What the devil does that matter to me, sir . . . my lord?

LORD JOHN. I owe you a saddle and bridle.

MR. TATTON. You'll oblige me by taking the mare.

LORD JOHN. We'll discuss it to-morrow.

MR. TATTON. I've said all I have to say.

GEORGE. The whole matter's ridiculous!

MR. TATTON. I see the joke. Good-night, Lady Cottesham, and I kiss your hand.

SARAH. Good morning, Mr. Tat.

MR. TATTON. Good morning, Miss Ann, I . . .

SARAH. [*Shielding her sister.*] Good morrow is appropriate.

MR. TATTON. I'll go by the fields. [*To* CARNABY.] Thank you for a pleasant evening. Good morrow, George. Do we start at mid-day, my lord?

LORD JOHN. Any time you please.

MR. TATTON. Not at all. [*He hands the candlestick—of which he has never before left go—to* GEORGE.] I brought this for a link. Thank you.

CARNABY. Mid-day will be midnight if you sleep at all now; make it two, or later.

MR. TATTON. We put up at Guildford. I've done so before. I haven't my hat. It's a day and a half's ride.

TATTON *goes quickly up the other steps and away. It is now quite light.* GEORGE *stands by the steps,* LORD JOHN *is on one of the seats,* CARNABY *strolls round, now and then touching the rose trees,* SARAH *and* ANN *are on the other seat.*

GEORGE. Morning! These candles still smell.

SARAH. How lively one feels and isn't!

CARNABY. The flowers are opening.

ANN. [*In a whisper.*] Couldn't we go in?

SARAH. Never run away.

ANN. Everything looks so odd.

SARAH. What's o'clock . . . my lord?

LORD JOHN. Half after four.

ANN. [*To* SARAH.] My eyes are hot behind.

GEORGE. What ghosts we seem!

SARAH. What has made us spend such a night?

CARNABY. Ann incited me to it. [*He takes snuff.*]

SARAH. In a spirit of rebellion against good country habits . . .

ANN. [*To her sister again.*] Don't talk about me.

SARAH. They can see that you're whispering.

CARNABY. . . . Informing me now she was a woman and wanted excitement.

GEORGE. There's a curse.

CARNABY. How else d'ye conceive life for women?

SARAH. George is naturally cruel. Excitement's our education. Please vary it, though.

CARNABY. I have always held that to colour in the world-picture is the greatest privilege of the husband. Sarah.

SARAH. [*Not leaving* ANN's *side.*] Yes, Papa.

CARNABY. Sarah, when Sir Charles leaves Brighton . . .

SARAH *rises, but will not move further.*

CARNABY. [*Sweetly threatening.*] Shall I come to you?

But she goes to him now.

CARNABY. By a gossip letter from town . . .

SARAH. [*Tensely.*] What is it?

CARNABY. You mentioned to me something of his visiting Naples.

SARAH. Very well. I detest Italy.

CARNABY. Let's have George's opinion.

He leads her towards GEORGE.

GEORGE. Yes?

CARNABY. Upon Naples.

GEORGE. I remember Naples.

CARNABY. Sarah, admire those roses.

SARAH. [*Cynically echoing her father.*] Let's have George's opinion.

Now CARNABY *has drawn them both away, upon the terrace, and, the coast being clear,* LORD JOHN *walks towards* ANN, *who looks at him very scaredly.*

CARNABY. Emblem of secrecy among the ancients.

SARAH. Look at this heavy head, won't it snap off?

The three move out of sight.

LORD JOHN. I'm sober now.

ANN. I'm not.

LORD JOHN. Uncompromising young lady.

ANN. And, excuse me, I don't want to . . . play.

LORD JOHN. Don't you wish me to apologise quietly, to you?

ANN. Good manners are all mockery, I'm sure.

LORD JOHN. I'm very much afraid you're a cynic.

ANN. I'm not trying to be clever.

LORD JOHN. Do I tease you?

ANN. Do I amuse you?

LORD JOHN. How dare I say so?

ANN. [*After a moment.*] I was not frightened.

LORD JOHN. You kissed me back.

ANN. Not on purpose. What do two people mean by behaving so . . . in the dark?

LORD JOHN. I am exceedingly sorry that I hurt your feelings.

ANN. Thank you, I like to feel.

LORD JOHN. And you must forgive me.

ANN. Tell me, why did you do it?

LORD JOHN. Honestly, I don't know. I should do it again.

ANN. That's not quite true, is it?

LORD JOHN. I think so.

ANN. What does it matter at all!

LORD JOHN. Nothing.

GEORGE, SARAH *and then* CARNABY *move into sight and along the terrace.* LORD JOHN *turns to them.*

LORD JOHN. Has this place been long in your family, Mr. Leete?

CARNABY. Markswayde my wife brought us, through the Peters's . . . old Chiltern people . . . connections of yours, of course. There is no entail.

LORD JOHN *walks back to* ANN.

SARAH. George, you assume this republicanism as you would—no, would not—a coat of latest cut.

CARNABY. Never argue with him . . . persist.

SARAH. So does he.

The three pass along the terrace.

ANN. [*To* LORD JOHN.] Will you sit down?

LORD JOHN. It's not worth while. Do you know I must be quite twice your age?

ANN. A doubled responsibility, my lord.

LORD JOHN. I suppose it is.

ANN. I don't say so. That's a phrase from a book . . . sounded well.

LORD JOHN. My dear Miss Ann . . . [*He stops.*]

ANN. Go on being polite.

LORD JOHN. If you'll keep your head turned away.

ANN. Why must I?

LORD JOHN. There's lightning in the glances of your eye.

ANN. Do use vulgar words to me.

LORD JOHN. [*With a sudden fatherly kindness.*] Go to bed . . . you're dead tired. And good-bye . . . I'll be gone before you wake.

ANN. Good-bye.

She shakes hands with him, then walks towards her father, who is coming down the steps.

ANN. Papa, don't my roses want looking to?

CARNABY. [*Pats her cheek.*] These?

ANN. Those.

CARNABY. Abud is under your thumb, horticulturally speaking.

ANN. Where's Sally?

She goes on to SARAH, *who is standing with* GEORGE *at the top of the steps.* CARNABY *looks* LORD JOHN *up and down.*

LORD JOHN. [*Dusting his shoulder.*] This cursed powder!

CARNABY. Do we respect innocence enough . . . any of us?

GEORGE *comes down the steps and joins them.*

GEORGE. Respectable politics will henceforth be useless to me.

CARNABY. My lord, was his Grace satisfied with the young man's work abroad, or was he not?

LORD JOHN. My father used to curse everyone.

CARNABY. That's a mere Downing Street custom.

LORD JOHN. And I seem to remember that a letter of yours from . . . where were you in those days?

GEORGE. Paris . . . Naples . . . Vienna.

LORD JOHN. One place . . . once lightened a fit of gout.

CARNABY. George, you have in you the makings of a minister.

GEORGE. No.

CARNABY. Remember the Age tends to the disreputable.

GEORGE *moves away,* SARAH *moves towards them.*

CARNABY. George is something of a genius, stuffed with theories and possessed of a curious conscience. But I am fortunate in my children.

LORD JOHN. All the world knows it.

CARNABY. [*To* SARAH.] It's lucky that yours was a love match, too. I admire you. Ann is 'to come,' so to speak.

SARAH. [*To* LORD JOHN.] Were you discussing affairs?

LORD JOHN. Not I.

GEORGE. Ann.

ANN. Yes, George.

She goes to him; they stroll together up the steps and along the terrace.

SARAH. I'm desperately fagged.

LORD JOHN. [*Politely.*] A seat.

SARAH. Also tired of sitting.

CARNABY. Let's have the Brighton news, Carp.

LORD JOHN. If there's any.

CARNABY. Probably I still command abuse. Even my son-in-law must, by courtesy, join in the cry . . . ah, poor duty-torn Sarah! You can spread abroad that I am as a green bay tree.

CARNABY *paces slowly away from them.*

LORD JOHN. Your father's making a mistake.

SARAH. D'you think so?

LORD JOHN. He's played the game once.

SARAH. I was not then in the knowledge of things when he left you.

LORD JOHN. We remember it.

SARAH. I should like to hear it.

LORD JOHN. I have avoided this subject.

SARAH. With him, yes.

LORD JOHN. Oh! . . . why did I desert the army for politics?

SARAH. Better fighting.

LORD JOHN. It sat so nobly upon him . . . the leaving us for conscience sake when we were strongly in power. Strange that six months later we should be turned out.

SARAH. Papa was lucky.

LORD JOHN. But this second time . . . ?

SARAH. Listen. This is very much a private quarrel with Mr. Pitt, who hates Papa . . . gets rid of him.

LORD JOHN. Shall I betray a confidence?

SARAH. Better not.

LORD JOHN. My father advised me to this visit.

SARAH. Your useful visit. More than kind of his Grace.

LORD JOHN. Yes . . . there's been a paragraph in the "Morning Chronicle," 'The Whigs woo Mr. Carnaby Leete.'

SARAH. We saw to it.

LORD JOHN. My poor father seems anxious to discover whether the Leete episode will repeat itself entirely. He is chronically unhappy in opposition. Are your husband and his colleagues trembling in their seats?

SARAH. I can't say.

LORD JOHN. Politics is a game for clever children, and women and fools. Will you take a word of warning from a soldier? Your father is past his prime.

CARNABY *paces back towards them.*

CARNABY. I'm getting to be old for these all-night sittings. I must be writing to your busy brother.

LORD JOHN. Arthur? . . . is at his home.

SARAH. Pleasantly sounding phrase.

CARNABY. His Grace deserted?

SARAH. Quite secretaryless!

LORD JOHN. Lady Arthur lately has been brought to bed. I heard yesterday.

SARAH. The seventh, is it not? Children require living up to. My congratulations.

LORD JOHN. Won't you write them?

SARAH. We are not intimate.

LORD JOHN. A good woman.

SARAH. Evidently. Where's Ann? We'll go in.

LORD JOHN. You're a mother to your sister.

SARAH. Not I.

CARNABY. My wife went her ways into the next world; Sarah hers into this; and our little Ann was left with a most admirable governess. One must never reproach circumstances. Man educates woman in his own good time.

LORD JOHN. I suppose she, or any young girl, is all heart.

CARNABY. What is it that you call heart . . . sentimentally speaking?

SARAH. Any bud in the morning.

LORD JOHN. That man Tatton's jokes are in shocking taste.

CARNABY. Tatton is honest.

LORD JOHN. I'm much to blame for having won that bet.

CARNABY. Say no more.

LORD JOHN. What can Miss Ann think of me?

SARAH. Don't ask her.

CARNABY. Innocency's opinions are invariably entertaining.

LORD JOHN. Am I the first . . . ? I really beg your pardon.

GEORGE *and* ANN *come down the steps together.*

CARNABY. Ann, what do you think . . . that is to say—and answer me truthfully . . . what at this moment is your inclination of mind towards my lord here?

ANN. I suppose I love him.

LORD JOHN. I hope not.

ANN. I suppose I love you.

CARNABY. No . . no . . no . . no . . no . . no . . no.

SARAH. Hush, dear.

ANN. I'm afraid, Papa, there's something very ill-bred in me.

Down the steps, and into the midst of them, comes JOHN ABUD, *carrying his tools, among other things a twist of bass. A young gardener, honest, clean and common.*

ABUD. [*To* CARNABY.] I ask pardon, sir.

CARNABY. So early, Abud! . . . this is your territory. So late . . . Bed.

ANN *starts away up the steps;* SARAH *is following her.*

LORD JOHN. Good-bye, Lady Cottesham.

At this ANN *stops for a moment, but then goes straight on.*

SARAH. A pleasant journey.

SARAH *departs, too.*

GEORGE. [*Stretching himself.*] I'm roused.

CARNABY. [*To* ABUD.] Leave your tools here for a few moments.

ABUD. I will, sir.

ABUD *leaves them, going along the terrace and out of sight.*

CARNABY. My head is hot. Pardon me.

CARNABY *is sitting on the fountain rim; he dips his handkerchief in the water, and wrings it; then takes off his wig and binds the damp handkerchief round his head.*

CARNABY. Wigs are most comfortable and old fashioned . . . unless you choose to be a cropped republican like my son.

GEORGE. Nature!

CARNABY. Nature grows a beard, sir.

LORD JOHN. I've seen Turks.

CARNABY. Horrible . . . horrible! Sit down, Carp.

LORD JOHN *sits on the fountain rim,* GEORGE *begins to pace restlessly; he has been nursing the candlestick ever since* TATTON *handed it to him.*

CARNABY. George, you look damned ridiculous strutting arm-in-arm with that candlestick.

GEORGE. I am ridiculous.

CARNABY. If you're cogitating over your wife and her expectations . . .

GEORGE *paces up the steps and away. There is a pause.*

CARNABY. D'ye tell stories . . . good ones?

LORD JOHN. Sometimes.

CARNABY. There'll be this.

LORD JOHN. I shan't.

CARNABY. Say no more. If I may so express myself, Carp, you have been taking us for granted.

LORD JOHN. How wide awake you are! I'm not.

CARNABY. My head's cool. Shall I describe your conduct as an unpremeditated insult?

LORD JOHN. Don't think anything of the sort.

CARNABY. There speaks your kind heart.

LORD JOHN. Are you trying to pick a quarrel with me?

CARNABY. As may be.

LORD JOHN. Why?

CARNABY. For the sake of appearances.

LORD JOHN. Damn all appearances.

CARNABY. Now I'll lose my temper. Sir, you have compromised my daughter.

LORD JOHN. Nonsense!

CARNABY. Villain! What's your next move?

For a moment LORD JOHN *sits with knit brows.*

LORD JOHN. [*Brutally.*] Mr. Leete, your name stinks.

CARNABY. My point of dis-ad-vantage!

LORD JOHN. [*Apologising.*] Please say what you like. I might have put my remark better.

CARNABY. I think not; the homely Saxon phrase is our literary dagger. Princelike, you ride away from Markswayde. Can I trust you not to stab a socially sick man? Why, it's a duty you owe to society . . . to weed out . . . us.

LORD JOHN. I'm not a coward. How?

CARNABY. A little laughter . . . in your exuberance of health.

LORD JOHN. You may trust me not to tell tales.

CARNABY. Of what . . . of whom?

LORD JOHN. Of here.

CARNABY. And what is there to tell of here?

LORD JOHN. Nothing.

CARNABY. But how your promise betrays a capacity for good-natured invention!

LORD JOHN. If I lie, call me out.

CARNABY. I don't deal in sentiment. I can't afford to be talked about otherwise than as I choose to be. Already the Aunt Sally of the hour; having under pressure of circumstances resigned my office; dating my letters from the borders of the Chiltern Hundreds . . . I am a poor politician, sir, and I must live.

LORD JOHN. I can't see that your family's infected . . . affected.

CARNABY. With a penniless girl you really should have been more circumspect.

LORD JOHN. I might ask to marry her.

CARNABY. My lord!

In the pause that ensues he takes up the twist of bass to play with.

LORD JOHN. What should you say to that?

CARNABY. The silly child supposed she loved you.

LORD JOHN. Yes.

CARNABY. Is it a match?

LORD JOHN. [*Full in the other's face.*] What about the appearances of black-mail?

CARNABY. [*Compressing his thin lips.*] Do you care for my daughter?

LORD JOHN. I could . . . at a pinch.

CARNABY. Now, my lord, you are insolent.

LORD JOHN. Is this when we quarrel?

CARNABY. I think I'll challenge you.

LORD JOHN. That will look well.

CARNABY. You'll value that kiss when you've paid for it. Kindly choose Tatton as your second. I want his tongue to wag both ways.

LORD JOHN. I was forgetting how it all began.

CARNABY. George will serve me . . . protesting. His

principles are vile, but he has the education of a gentleman. Swords or . . . ? Swords. And at noon shall we say? There's shade behind a certain barn, midway between this and Tatton's.

LORD JOHN. [*Not taking him seriously yet.*] What if we both die horridly?

CARNABY. You are at liberty to make me a written apology.

LORD JOHN. A joke's a joke.

CARNABY *deliberately strikes him in the face with the twist of bass.*

LORD JOHN. That's enough.

CARNABY. [*In explanatory apology.*] My friend, you are so obtuse. Abud!

LORD JOHN. Mr. Leete, are you serious?

CARNABY. Perfectly serious. Let's go to bed. Abud, you can get to your work.

Wig in hand, MR. LEETE *courteously conducts his guest towards the house.* ABUD *returns to his tools and his morning's work.*

THE SECOND ACT

Shortly after mid-day, while the sun beats strongly upon the terrace, ABUD *is working dexterously at the rose trees.* DR. REMNANT *comes down the steps, hatted, and carrying a stick and a book. He is an elderly man, with a kind manner; type of the eighteenth century casuistical parson. On his way he stops to say a word to the gardener.*

DR. REMNANT. Will it rain before nightfall?

ABUD. About then, sir, I should say.

Down the other steps comes MRS. OPIE, *a prim, decorous, but well bred and unobjectionable woman. She is followed by* ANN.

MRS. OPIE. A good morning to you, Parson.

DR. REMNANT. And to you, Mrs. Opie, and to Miss Ann.

ANN. Good morning, Dr. Remnant. [*To* ABUD.] Have you been here ever since . . . ?

ABUD. I've had dinner, Miss.

ABUD'S *work takes him gradually out of sight.*

MRS. OPIE. We are but just breakfasted.

DR. REMNANT. I surmise dissipation.

ANN. [*To* MRS. OPIE.] Thank you for waiting five hours.

MRS. OPIE. It is my rule to breakfast with you.

DR. REMNANT. [*Exhibiting the book.*] I am come to return, and to borrow.

ANN. Show me.

DR. REMNANT. Ballads by Robert Burns.

ANN. [*Taking it.*] I'll put it back.

MRS. OPIE. [*Taking it from her.*] I've never heard of him.

DR. REMNANT. Oh, ma'am, a very vulgar poet!

GEORGE LEETE *comes quickly down the steps.*

GEORGE. [*To* REMNANT.] How are you?

DR. REMNANT. Yours, sir.

GEORGE. Ann.

ANN. Good morning, George.

GEORGE. Did you sleep well?

ANN. I always do . . . but I dreamt.

GEORGE. I must sit down for a minute. [*Nodding.*] Mrs. Opie.

MRS. OPIE. I wish you a good morning, sir.

GEORGE. [*To* ANN.] Don't look so solemn.

LADY COTTESHAM *comes quickly to the top of the steps.*

SARAH. Is Papa badly hurt?

ANN. [*Jumping up.*] Oh, what has happened?

GEORGE. Not badly.

SARAH. He won't see me.

His three children look at each other.

DR. REMNANT. [*Tactfully.*] May I go my ways to the library?

SARAH. Please do, Doctor Remnant.

DR. REMNANT. I flatly contradicted all that was being said in the village.

SARAH. Thoughtful of you.

DR. REMNANT. But tell me nothing.

DR. REMNANT *bows formally and goes.* GEORGE *is about to speak when* SARAH, *with a look at* MRS. OPIE, *says . . .*

SARAH. George, hold your tongue.

MRS. OPIE. [*With much hauteur.*] I am in the way.

At this moment DIMMUCK, *an old but unbenevolent-looking butler, comes to the top of the steps.*

DIMMUCK. The master wants Mrs. Opie.

MRS. OPIE. Thank you.

GEORGE. Your triumph!

MRS. OPIE *is departing, radiant.*

DIMMUCK. How was I to know you was in the garden?

MRS. OPIE. I am sorry to have put you to the trouble of a search, Mr. Dimmuck.

DIMMUCK. He's in his room.

And he follows her towards the house.

GEORGE. Carp fought with him at twelve o'clock.

The other two cannot speak from amazement.

SARAH. No!

GEORGE. Why, they didn't tell me, and I didn't ask. Carp was laughing. Tatton chuckled . . . afterwards.

SARAH. What had he to do?

GEORGE. Carp's second.

SARAH. Unaccountable children!

GEORGE. Feather parade . . . throw in . . . parry quarte: over the arm . . . put by: feint . . . flanconade and through his arm . . . damned easy. The father didn't wince or say a word. I bound it up . . . the sight of blood makes me sick.

After a moment SARAH *turns to* ANN.

SARAH. Yes, and you've been a silly child.

GEORGE. Ah, give me a woman's guess and the most unlikely reason to account for anything!

ANN. I hate that man. I'm glad Papa's not hurt. What about a surgeon?

GEORGE. No, you shall kiss the place well, and there'll be poetic justice done.

SARAH. How did you all part?

GEORGE. With bows and without a word.

SARAH. Coming home with him?

GEORGE. Not a word.

SARAH. Papa's very clever; but I'm puzzled.

GEORGE. Something will happen next, no doubt.

ANN. Isn't this done with?

SARAH. So it seems.

ANN. I should like to be told just what the game has been.

GEORGE. Bravo, Ann.

ANN. Tell me the rules . . . for next time.

SARAH. It would have been most advantageous for us to have formed an alliance with Lord John Carp, who stood here for his father and his father's party . . . now in opposition.

GEORGE. Look upon yourself—not too seriously—Ann, as the instrument of political destiny.

ANN. I'm afraid I take in fresh ideas very slowly. Why has Papa given up the Stamp Office?

SARAH. His colleagues wouldn't support him.

ANN. Why was that?

SARAH. They disapproved of what he did.

ANN. Did he do right . . . giving it up?

SARAH. Yes.

GEORGE. We hope so. Time will tell. An irreverent quipster once named him Carnaby Leech.

SARAH. I know.

GEORGE. I wonder if his true enemies think him wise to have dropped off the Stamp Office?

ANN. Has he quarrelled with Sir Charles?

SARAH. Politically.

ANN. Isn't that awkward for you?

SARAH. Not a bit.

GEORGE. Hear a statement that includes our lives. Markswayde goes at his death . . . see reversionary mortgage. The income's an annuity now. The cash in the house will be ours. The debts are paid . . . at last.

ANN. And there remains me.

GEORGE. Bad grammar. Meanwhile our father is a

tongue, which is worth buying, but I don't think he ought to go over to the enemy . . . for the second time.

SARAH. One party is as good as another; each works for the same end, I should hope.

GEORGE. I won't argue about it.

ANN. I suppose that a woman's profession is marriage.

GEORGE. My lord has departed.

ANN. There'll be others to come. I'm not afraid of being married.

SARAH. What did Papa want Mrs. Opie for?

ANN. There'll be a great many things I shall want to know about men now.

GEORGE. Wisdom cometh with sorrow . . . oh, my sister.

SARAH. I believe you two are both about as selfish as you can be.

GEORGE. I am an egotist . . . with attachments.

ANN. Make use of me.

GEORGE. Ann, you marry—when you marry—to please yourself.

ANN. There's much in life that I don't like, Sally.

SARAH. There's much more that you will.

GEORGE. I think we three have never talked together before.

ABUD, *who has been in sight on the terrace for a few moments, now comes down the steps.*

ABUD. May I make so bold, sir, as to ask how is Mrs. George Leete?

GEORGE. She was well when I last heard.

ABUD. Thank you, sir.

And he returns to his work.

ANN. I wonder will it be a boy or a girl?

GEORGE. Poor weak woman.

SARAH. Be grateful to her.

ANN. A baby is a wonderful thing.

SARAH. Babyhood in the abstract . . . beautiful.

ANN. Even kittens . . .

She stops, and then in rather childish embarrassment, moves away from them.

SARAH. Don't shudder, George.

GEORGE. I have no wish to be a father. Why?

SARAH. It's a vulgar responsibility.

GEORGE. My wayside flower!

SARAH. Why pick it?

GEORGE. Sarah, I love my wife.

SARAH. That's easily said.

GEORGE. She should be here.

SARAH. George, you married to please yourself.

GEORGE. By custom her rank is my own.

SARAH. Does she still drop her aitches?

GEORGE. Dolly . . .

SARAH. Pretty name.

GEORGE. Dolly aspires to be one of us.

SARAH. Child-bearing makes these women blowzy.

GEORGE. Oh heaven!

ANN. [*Calling to* ABUD *on the terrace.*] Finish to-day, Abud. If it rains . . .

She stops, seeing MR. TETGEEN *standing at the top of the steps leading from the house. This is an intensely respectable, selfcontained-looking lawyer, but a man of the world, too.*

MR. TETGEEN. Lady Cottesham.

SARAH. Sir?

MR. TETGEEN. My name is Tetgeen.

SARAH. Mr. Tetgeen. How do you do?

MR. TETGEEN. The household appeared to be in some confusion, and I took the liberty to be my own messenger. I am anxious to speak with you.

SARAH. Ann, dear, ask if Papa will see you now.

DIMMUCK *appears.*

DIMMUCK. The master wants you, Miss Ann.

SARAH. Ask Papa if he'll see me soon.

ANN *goes towards the house.*

SARAH. Dimmuck, Mr. Tetgeen has been left to find his own way here.

DIMMUCK. I couldn't help it, my lady.

And he follows ANN.

SARAH. Our father is confined to his room.

GEORGE. By your leave.

Then GEORGE *takes himself off up the steps, and out of sight. The old lawyer bows to* LADY COTTESHAM, *who regards him steadily.*

MR. TETGEEN. From Sir Charles . . . a talking machine.

SARAH. Please sit.

He sits carefully upon the rim of the fountain, she upon the seat opposite.

SARAH. [*Glancing over her shoulder.*] Will you talk nonsense until the gardener is out of hearing? He is on his way away. You have had a tiring journey?

MR. TETGEEN. Thank you, no . . . by the night coach to Reading, and thence I have walked.

SARAH. The country is pretty, is it not?

MR. TETGEEN. It compares favorably with other parts.

SARAH. Do you travel much, Mr. Tetgeen? He has gone.

MR. TETGEEN. [*Deliberately, and sharpening his tone ever so little.*] Sir Charles does not wish to petition for a divorce.

SARAH. [*Controlling even her sense of humor.*] I have no desire to jump over the moon.

MR. TETGEEN. His scruples are religious. The case would be weak upon some important points, and there has been no public scandal . . . at the worst, very little.

SARAH. My good manners are, I trust, irreproachable, and you may tell Sir Charles that my conscience is my own.

MR. TETGEEN. Your husband's in the matter of . . .

SARAH. Please say the word.

MR. TETGEEN. Pardon me . . . not upon mere suspicion.

SARAH. Now, is it good policy to suspect what is incapable of proof?

MR. TETGEEN. I advise Sir Charles that, should you come to an open fight, he can afford to lose.

SARAH. And have I no right to suspicions?

MR. TETGEEN. Certainly. Are they of use to you?

SARAH. I have been a tolerant wife, expecting toleration.

MR. TETGEEN. Sir Charles is anxious to take into consideration any complaints you may have to make against him.

SARAH. I complain if he complains of me.

MR. TETGEEN. For the first time, I think . . . formally.

SARAH. Why not have come to me?

MR. TETGEEN. Sir Charles is busy.

SARAH. [*Disguising a little spasm of pain.*] Shall we get to business?

MR. TETGEEN *now takes a moment to find his phrase.*

MR. TETGEEN. I don't know the man's name.

SARAH. This, surely, is how you might address a seduced housemaid!

MR. TETGEEN. But Sir Charles and he, I understand, have talked the matter over.

The shock of this brings SARAH *to her feet, white with anger.*

SARAH. Divorce me.

MR. TETGEEN. [*Sharply.*] Is there ground for it?

SARAH. [*With a magnificent recovery of self control.*] I won't tell you that.

MR. TETGEEN. I have said we have no case . . . that is to say, we don't want one; but any information is a weapon in store.

SARAH. You did quite right to insult me.

MR. TETGEEN. As a rule, I despise such methods.

SARAH. It's a lie that they met . . . those two men?

MR. TETGEEN. It may be.

SARAH. It must be.

MR. TETGEEN. I have Sir Charles's word.

Now he takes from his pocket some notes, putting on his spectacles to read them.

SARAH. What's this . . . a written lecture?

MR. TETGEEN. We propose . . . first: that the present complete severance of conjugal relations shall continue. Secondly: that Lady Cottesham shall be at liberty to remove from South Audley Street and Ringham Castle all personal and private effects, excepting those family jewels which have merely been considered her property. Thirdly: Lady Cottesham shall undertake, formally, and in writing, not to molest—a legal term—Sir Charles Cottesham. [*Her handkerchief has dropped, here he picks it up and restores it to her.*] Allow me, my lady.

SARAH. I thank you.

MR. TETGEEN. [*Continuing.*] Fourthly: Lady Cottesham shall undertake . . . etc. . . . not to inhabit or frequent the city and towns of London, Brighthelmstone, Bath, The Tunbridge Wells, and York. Fifthly: Sir Charles Cottesham will, in acknowledgement of the maintenance of this agreement, allow Lady C. the sum of two hundred and fifty pounds per annum, which sum he considers sufficient for the upkeep of a small genteel establishment; use of the house known as Pater House, situate some seventeen miles from the Manor of Barton-le-Street, Yorkshire; coals from the mine adjoining; and from the home farm, milk, butter and eggs. [*Then he finds a further note.*] Lady Cottesham is not to play cards.

SARAH. I am a little fond of play.

MR. TETGEEN. There is no question of jointure.

SARAH. None. Mr. Tetgeen . . . I love my husband.

MR. TETGEEN. My lady . . . I will mention it.

SARAH. Such a humorous answer to this. No . . . don't. What is important? Bread and butter . . . and eggs. Do I take this?

MR. TETGEEN. [*Handing her the paper.*] Please.

SARAH. [*With the ghost of a smile.*] I take it badly.

MR. TETGEEN. [*Courteously capping her jest.*] I take my leave.

SARAH. This doesn't call for serious notice? I've done nothing legal by accepting it?

MR. TETGEEN. There's no law in the matter; it's one of policy.

SARAH. I might bargain for a bigger income. [MR. TETGEEN *bows.*] On the whole, I'd rather be divorced.

MR. TETGEEN. Sir Charles detests scandal.

SARAH. Besides, there's no case . . . is there?

MR. TETGEEN. Sir Charles congratulates himself.

SARAH. Sir Charles had best not bully me so politely . . . tell him.

MR. TETGEEN. My lady!

SARAH. I will not discuss this impertinence. Did those two men meet and talk . . . chat together? What d'you think of that?

MR. TETGEEN. 'Twas very practical. I know that the woman is somehow the outcast.

SARAH. A bad woman . . . an idle woman! But I've tried to do so much that lay to my hands without ever questioning . . . ! Thank you, I don't want this retailed to my husband. You'll take a glass of wine before you go?

MR. TETGEEN. Port is grateful.

She takes from her dress two sealed letters.

SARAH. Will you give that to Sir Charles . . . a letter he wrote me which I did not open. This, my answer, which I did not send.

He takes the one letter courteously, the other she puts back.

SARAH. I'm such a coward, Mr. Tetgeen.

MR. TETGEEN. May I say how sorry . . . ?

SARAH. Thank you.

MR. TETGEEN. And let me apologise for having expressed one opinion of my own.

SARAH. He wants to get rid of me. He's a bit afraid of me, you know, because I fight . . . and my weapons are all my own. This'll blow over.

MR. TETGEEN. [*With a shake of the head.*] You are to take this offer as final.

SARAH. Beyond this?

MR. TETGEEN. As I hinted, I am prepared to advise legal measures.

SARAH. I could blow it over . . . but I won't, perhaps. I must smile at my husband's consideration in suppressing, even to you . . . the man's name. Butter and eggs . . . and milk. I should grow fat.

ANN *appears suddenly.*

ANN. We go to Brighton to-morrow! [*And she comes excitedly to her sister.*]

SARAH. Was that duel a stroke of genius?

ANN. All sorts of things are to happen.

SARAH. [*Turning from her to* MR. TETGEEN.] And you'll walk as far as Reading?

MR. TETGEEN. Dear me, yes.

SARAH. [*To* ANN.] I'll come back.

SARAH *takes* MR. TETGEEN *towards the house.* ANN *seats herself. After a moment* LORD JOHN CARP, *his clothes dusty with some riding, appears from the other quarter. She looks up to find him gazing at her.*

LORD JOHN. Ann, I've ridden back to see you.

ANN. [*After a moment.*] We're coming to Brighton to-morrow.

LORD JOHN. Good.

ANN. Papa's not dead.

LORD JOHN. [*With equal cheerfulness.*] That's good.

ANN. And he said we should be seeing more of you.

LORD JOHN. Here I am. I love you, Ann. [*He goes on his knees.*]

ANN. D'you want to marry me?

LORD JOHN. Yes.

ANN. Thank you very much; it'll be very convenient for us all. Won't you get up?

LORD JOHN. At your feet.

ANN. I like it.

LORD JOHN. Give me your hand.

ANN. No.

LORD JOHN. You're beautiful.

ANN. I don't think so. You don't think so.

LORD JOHN. I do think so.

ANN. I should like to say I don't love you.

LORD JOHN. Last night you kissed me.

ANN. Do get up, please.

LORD JOHN. As you wish.

Now he sits by her.

ANN. Last night you were nobody in particular . . . to me.

LORD JOHN. I love you.

ANN. Please don't; I can't think clearly.

LORD JOHN. Look at me.

ANN. I'm sure I don't love you, because you're making me feel very uncomfortable, and that wouldn't be so.

LORD JOHN. Then we'll think.

ANN. Papa . . . perhaps you'd rather not talk about Papa.

LORD JOHN. Give yourself to me.

ANN. [*Drawing away from him.*] Four words! There

ought to be more in such a sentence . . . it's ridiculous. I want a year to think about its meaning. Don't speak.

LORD JOHN. Papa joins our party.

ANN. That's what we're after . . . thank you.

LORD JOHN. I loathe politics.

ANN. Tell me something against them.

LORD JOHN. In my opinion your father's not a much bigger blackguard—I beg your pardon—than the rest of us.

ANN. . . . Miserable sinners.

LORD JOHN. Your father turns his coat. Well . . . ?

ANN. I see nothing at all in that.

LORD JOHN. What's right and what's wrong?

ANN. Papa's right . . . for the present.

ANN. When shall we be married?

LORD JOHN. To-morrow?

ANN. [*Startled.*] If you knew that it isn't easy for me to be practical you wouldn't make fun.

LORD JOHN. Why not to-morrow?

ANN. Papa——

LORD JOHN. Papa says yes . . suppose.

ANN. I'm very young . . not to speak of clothes. I must have lots of new dresses.

LORD JOHN. Ask me for them.

ANN. Why do you want to marry me?

LORD JOHN. I love you.

ANN. It suddenly occurs to me that sounds unpleasant.

LORD JOHN. I love you.

ANN. Out of place.

LORD JOHN. I love you.

ANN. What if Papa were to die?

LORD JOHN. I want y o u.

ANN. I'm nothing . . I'm nobody . . I'm part of my family.

LORD JOHN. I want you.

ANN. Won't you please forget last night?

LORD JOHN. I want you. Look straight at me.

She looks, and stays fascinated.

LORD JOHN. If I say now that I love you——

ANN. I know it.

LORD JOHN. And love me?

ANN. I suppose so.

LORD JOHN. Make sure.

ANN. But I hate you, too .. I know that.

LORD JOHN. Shall I kiss you?

ANN. [*Helplessly.*] Yes.

He kisses her full on the lips.

ANN. I can't hate you enough.

LORD JOHN. [*Triumphantly.*] Speak the truth now.

ANN. I feel very degraded.

LORD JOHN. Nonsense.

ANN. [*Wretchedly.*] This is one of the things which don't matter.

LORD JOHN. Ain't you to be mine?

ANN. You want the right to behave like that as well as the power.

LORD JOHN. You shall command me.

ANN. [*With a poor laugh.*] I rather like this, in a way.

LORD JOHN. Little coquette!

ANN. It does tickle my vanity.

For a moment he sits looking at her, then shakes himself to his feet.

LORD JOHN. Now I must go.

ANN. Yes . . I want to think.

LORD JOHN. For Heaven's sake . . no!

ANN. I came this morning straight to where we were last night.

LORD JOHN. As I hung about the garden my heart was beating.

ANN. I shall like you better when you're not here.

LORD JOHN. We're to meet in Brighton?

ANN. I'm afraid so.

LORD JOHN. Good-bye.

ANN. There's just a silly sort of attraction between certain people, I believe.

LORD JOHN. Can you look me in the eyes and say you don't love me?

ANN. If I looked you in the eyes you'd frighten me again. I can say anything.

LORD JOHN. You're a deep child.

GEORGE LEETE *appears on the terrace.*

GEORGE. My lord!

LORD JOHN. [*Cordially.*] My dear Leete.

GEORGE. No . . I am not surprised to see you.

ANN. George, things are happening.

LORD JOHN. Shake hands.

GEORGE. I will not.

ANN. Lord John asks me to be married to him. Shake hands.

GEORGE. Why did you fight?

ANN. Why d i d you fight?

LORD JOHN. [*Shrugging.*] Your father struck me.

ANN. Now you've hurt him . . that's fair.

Then the two men do shake hands, not heartily.

GEORGE. We've trapped you, my lord.

LORD JOHN. I know what I want. I love your sister.

ANN. I don't like you . . but if you're good and I'm good we shall get on.

GEORGE. Why shouldn't one marry politically?

LORD JOHN. [*In* ANN'S *ear.*] I love you.

ANN. No .. no .. no .. no .. no .. [*Discovering in this an echo of her father, she stops short.*]

GEORGE. We're a cold-blooded family.

LORD JOHN. I don't think so.

GEORGE. I married for love.

LORD JOHN. Who doesn't? But, of course, there should be other reasons.

GEORGE. You won't receive my wife.

LORD JOHN. Here's your sister.

LADY COTTESHAM *comes from the direction of the house.*

SARAH. Back again?

LORD JOHN. You see.

From the other side appears MR. TATTON.

MR. TATTON. As you all seem to be here I don't mind interrupting.

GEORGE. [*Hailing him.*] Well . . neighbour?

MR. TATTON. Come . . come . . what's a little fighting more or less!

GEORGE. Bravo, English sentiment . . relieves a deal of awkwardness.

The two shake hands.

SARAH. [*Who by this has reached* LORD JOHN.] . . And back so soon?

ANN. Lord John asks to marry me.

LORD JOHN. Yes.

MR. TATTON. I guessed so . . give me a bit of romance!

SARAH. [*Suavely.*] This is perhaps a little sudden, my dear Lord John. Papa may naturally be a little shocked.

GEORGE. Not at all, Sarah.

MR. TATTON. How's the wound?

GEORGE. Not serious . . nothing's serious.

SARAH. You are very masterful, wooing sword in hand.

ANN. George and I have explained to Lord John that we are all most anxious to marry me to him, and he doesn't mind——

LORD JOHN. Being made a fool of. I love——

ANN. I will like you.

GEORGE. Charming cynicism, my dear Sarah.

MR. TATTON. Oh, Lord!

ANN. [*To her affianced.*] Good-bye now.

LORD JOHN. When do I see you?

ANN. Papa says soon.

LORD JOHN. Very soon, please. Tatton, my friend, Brighton's no nearer.

MR. TATTON. Lady Cottesham . . Miss Leete . . I kiss your hands.

LORD JOHN. [*Ebulliently clapping* GEORGE *on the back.*] Look more pleased. [*Then he bends over* LADY COTTESHAM'S *hand.*] Lady Charlie . . my service to you . . all. Ann. [*And he takes* ANN'S *hand to kiss.*]

ANN. If I can think better of all this, I shall. Good-bye.

She turns away from him. He stands for a moment considering her, but follows TATTON *away through the orchard.* GEORGE *and* SARAH *are watching their sister, who then comments on her little affair with life.*

ANN. I'm growing up. [*Then with a sudden tremor.*] Sally, don't let me be forced to marry.

GEORGE. Force of circumstances, my dear Ann.

ANN. Outside things. Why couldn't I run away from this garden and over the hills . . ? I suppose there's something on the other side of the hills.

SARAH. You'd find yourself there . . and circumstances.

ANN. So I'm trapped as well as that Lord John.

SARAH. What's the injury?

ANN. I'm taken by surprise, and I know I'm ignorant, and I think I'm learning things backwards.

GEORGE. You must cheer up and say: John's not a bad sort.

SARAH. A man of his age is a young man.

ANN. I wish you wouldn't recommend him to me.

SARAH. Let's think of Brighton. What about your gowns?

ANN. I've nothing to wear.

SARAH. We'll talk to Papa.

GEORGE. The war-purse is always a long one.

SARAH. George . . be one of us for a minute.

GEORGE. But I want to look on, too, and laugh.

SARAH. [*Caustically.*] Yes . . that's your privilege . . except occasionally. [*Then to her sister.*] I wish you all the happiness of courtship days.

GEORGE. Arcadian expression!

ANN. I believe it means being kissed . . often.

SARAH. Have you not a touch of romance in you, little girl?

ANN. Am I not like Mr. Dan Tatton? He kisses dairy-maids and servants and all the farmers' daughters . . I beg your pardon, George.

GEORGE. [*Nettled.*] I'll say to you, Ann, that—in all essentials—one woman is as good as another.

SARAH. That is not so in the polite world.

GEORGE. When you consider it, no one l i v e s in the polite world.

ANN. Do they come outside for air, sooner or later?

SARAH. [*Briskly.*] Three best dresses you must have, and something very gay if you're to go near the Pavilion.

ANN. You're coming to Brighton, Sally?

SARAH. No.

ANN. Why not?

SARAH. I don't wish to meet my husband.

GEORGE. That man was his lawyer.

ANN. The political difference, Sally?

SARAH. Just that. [*Then with a deft turn of the subject.*] I don't say that yours is a pretty face, but I should think you would have charm.

GEORGE. For fashion's sake cultivate sweetness.

SARAH. You dance as well as they know how in Reading.

ANN. Yes . . I can twiddle my feet.

SARAH. Do you like dancing?

ANN. I'd sooner walk.

GEORGE. What . . and get somewhere!

ANN. Here's George laughing.

SARAH. He's out of it.

ANN. Are you happy, George?

GEORGE. Alas . . Dolly's disgraceful ignorance of etiquette damns us both from the beautiful drawing-room.

SARAH. That laugh is forced. But how can you . . . look on?

There is a slight pause in their talk. Then . . .

ANN. He'll bully me with love.

SARAH. Your husband will give you just what you ask for.

ANN. I hate myself, too. I want to take people mentally.

GEORGE. You want a new world . . you new woman.

ANN. And I'm a good bit frightened of myself.

SARAH. We have our places to fill in this. My dear child, leave futile questions alone.

GEORGE. Neither have I any good advice to give you.

ANN. I think happiness is a thing one talks too much about.

DIMMUCK *appears. And by now* ABUD'S *work has brought him back to the terrace.*

DIMMUCK. The master would like to see your Ladyship now.

SARAH. I'll say we've had a visitor . . Guess.

GEORGE. And you've had a visitor, Sarah.

ANN. Papa will know.

SARAH. Is he in a questioning mood?

ANN. I always tell everything.

SARAH. It saves time.

She departs towards the house.

DIMMUCK. Mr. George.

GEORGE. What is it?

DIMMUCK. He said No to a doctor when I haven't even mentioned the matter. Had I better send . . ?

GEORGE. Do . . if you care to waste the doctor's time.

DIMMUCK *gives an offended sniff and follows* LADY COTTESHAM.

ANN. I could sit here for days. George, I don't think I quite believe in anything I've been told yet.

GEORGE. What's that man's name?

ANN. John—John is a common name—John Abud.

GEORGE. Abud!

ABUD. Sir?

GEORGE. Come here.

ABUD *obediently walks towards his young master and stands before him.*

GEORGE. Why did you ask after the health of Mrs. George Leete?

ABUD. We courted once.

GEORGE. [*After a moment.*] Listen, Ann. Do you hate me, John Abud?

ABUD. No, sir.

GEORGE. You're a fine-looking fellow. How old are you?

ABUD. Twenty-seven, sir.

GEORGE. Is Once long ago?

ABUD. Two years gone.

GEORGE. Did Mrs. Leete quarrel with you?

ABUD. No, sir.

GEORGE. Pray tell me more.

ABUD. I was beneath her.

GEORGE. But you're a fine-looking fellow.

ABUD. Farmer Crowe wouldn't risk his daughter being unhappy.

GEORGE. But she was beneath me.

ABUD. That was another matter, sir.

GEORGE. I don't think you intend to be sarcastic.

ABUD. And . . being near her time for the first time, sir . . I wanted to know if she is in danger of dying yet.

GEORGE. Every precaution has been taken . . a nurse . . there is a physician near. I need not tell you . . but I do tell you.

ABUD. Thank you, sir.

GEORGE. I take great interest in my wife.

ABUD. We all do, sir.

GEORGE. Was it ambition that you courted her?

ABUD. I thought to start housekeeping.

GEORGE. Did you aspire to rise socially?

ABUD. I wanted a wife to keep house, sir.

GEORGE. Are you content?

ABUD. I think so, sir.

GEORGE. With your humble position?

ABUD. I'm a gardener, and there'll always be gardens.

GEORGE. Frustrated affections . . I beg your pardon. . . To have been crossed in love should make you bitter and ambitious.

ABUD. My father was a gardener and my son will be a gardener if he's no worse a man than I and no better.

GEORGE. Are you married?

ABUD. No, sir.

GEORGE. Are you going to be married?

ABUD. Not especially, sir.

GEORGE. Yes . . you must marry . . some decent woman; we want gardeners.

ABUD. Do you want me any more now, sir?

GEORGE. You have interested me. You can go back to your work.

ABUD *obeys.*

GEORGE. [*Almost to himself.*] I am hardly human.

He slowly moves away and out of sight.

ANN. John Abud.

He comes back and stands before her too.

ANN. I am very sorry for you.

ABUD. I am very much obligated to you, Miss.

ANN. Both those sayings are quite meaningless. Say something true about yourself.

ABUD. I'm not sorry for myself.

ANN. I won't tell. It's very clear you ought to be in a despairing state. Don't stand in the sun with your hat off.

ABUD. [*Putting on his hat.*] Thank you, Miss.

ANN. Have you nearly finished the rose-trees?

ABUD. I must work till late this evening.

ANN. Weren't you ambitious for Dolly's sake?

ABUD. She thought me good enough.

ANN. I'd have married her.

ABUD. She was ambitious for me.

ANN. And are you frightened of the big world?

ABUD. Fine things dazzle me sometimes.

ANN. But gardening is all that you're fit for?

ABUD. I'm afraid so, Miss.

ANN. But it's great to be a gardener . . to sow seeds and to watch flowers grow and to cut away dead things.

ABUD. Yes, Miss.

ANN. And you're in the fresh air all day.

ABUD. That's very healthy.

ANN. Are you very poor?

ABUD. I get my meals in the house.

ANN. Rough clothes last a long time.

ABUD. I've saved money.

ANN. Where do you sleep?

ABUD. At Mrs. Hart's . . at a cottage . . it's a mile off.

ANN. And you want no more than food and clothes and a bed and you earn all that with your hands.

ABUD. The less a man wants, Miss, the better.

ANN. But you mean to marry?

ABUD. Yes . . I've saved money.

ANN. Whom will you marry? Would you rather not say? Perhaps you don't know yet?

ABUD. It's all luck what sort of a maid a man gets fond of. It won't be a widow.

ANN. Be careful, John Abud.

ABUD. No . . I shan't be careful.

ANN. You'll do very wrong to be made a fool of.

ABUD. I'm safe, Miss; I've no eye for a pretty face.

DIMMUCK *arrives asthmatically at the top of the steps.*

DIMMUCK. Where's Mr. George? Here's a messenger come post.

ANN. Find him, Abud.

ABUD. [*To* DIMMUCK.] From Dolly?

DIMMUCK. Speak respectful.

ABUD. It is from his wife?

DIMMUCK. Go find him.

ANN. [*As* ABUD *is immovable.*] Dimmuck . . . tell me about Mrs. George.

DIMMUCK. She's doing well, Miss.

ABUD. [*Shouting joyfully now.*] Mr. George! Mr. George!

ANN. A boy or a girl, Dimmuck?

DIMMUCK. Yes, Miss.

ABUD. Mr. George! Mr. George!

DIMMUCK. Ecod . . is he somewhere else?

DIMMUCK, *somewhat excited himself, returns to the house.*

ANN. George!

ABUD. Mr. George! Mr. George!

GEORGE *comes slowly along the terrace, in his hand an open book, which some people might suppose he was reading. He speaks with studied calm.*

GEORGE. You are very excited, my good man.

ABUD. She's brought you a child, sir.

ANN. Your child!

GEORGE. Certainly.

ABUD. Thank God, sir!

GEORGE. I will if I please.

ANN. And she's doing well.

ABUD. There's a messenger come post.

GEORGE. To be sure . . it might have been bad news.

And slowly he crosses the garden towards the house.

ABUD. [*Suddenly, beyond all patience.*] Run . . damn you!

George makes one supreme effort to maintain his dignity, but fails utterly. He gasps out . . .

GEORGE. Yes, I will. [*And runs off as hard as he can.*]

ABUD. [*In an ecstasy.*] This is good. Oh, Dolly and God . . this is good!

ANN. [*Round eyed.*] I wonder that you can be pleased.

ABUD. [*Apologising . . without apology.*] It's life.

ANN. [*Struck.*] Yes, it is.

And she goes towards the house, thinking this over.

THE THIRD ACT

It is near to sunset. The garden is shadier than before.

ABUD *is still working.* CARNABY LEETE *comes from the house, followed by* DR. REMNANT. *He wears his right arm in a sling. His face is flushed, his speech rapid.*

CARNABY. Parson, you didn't drink enough wine . . . damme, the wine was good.

DR. REMNANT. I am very grateful for an excellent dinner.

CARNABY. A good dinner, sir, is the crown to a good day's work.

DR. REMNANT. It may also be a comfort in affliction. Our philosophy does ill, Mr. Leete, when it despises the more simple means of contentment.

CARNABY. And which will be the better lover of a woman, a hungry or a well-fed man?

DR. REMNANT. A good meal digests love with it; for what is love but a food to live by . . but a hungry love will ofttimes devour its owner.

CARNABY. Admirable! Give me a man in love to deal with. Vous l'avez vu?

DR. REMNANT. Speak Latin, Greek or Hebrew to me, Mr. Leete.

CARNABY. French is the language of little things. My poor France! Ours is a little world, Parson . . . a man may hold it here. [*His open hand.*] Lord John Carp's a fine fellow.

DR. REMNANT. Son of a Duke.

CARNABY. And I commend to you the originality of his return. At twelve we fight . . . at one-thirty he proposes marriage to my daughter. D'ye see him humbly on his knees? Will there be rain, I wonder?

DR. REMNANT. We need rain . . Abud?

ABUD. Badly, sir.

CARNABY. Do we want a wet journey to-morrow! Where's Sarah?

DR. REMNANT. Lady Cottesham's taking tea.

CARNABY. [*To* ABUD, *with a sudden start.*] And why the devil didn't you marry my daughter-in-law . . my own gardener?

GEORGE *appears dressed for riding.*

GEORGE. Good-bye, sir, for the present.

CARNABY. Boots and breeches!

GEORGE. You shouldn't be about in the evening air with a green wound in your arm. You drank wine at dinner. Be careful, sir.

CARNABY. Off to your wife and the expected?

GEORGE. Yes, sir.

CARNABY. Riding to Watford?

GEORGE. From there alongside the North Coach, if I'm in time.

CARNABY. Don't founder my horse. Will ye leave the glorious news with your grandfather at Wycombe?

GEORGE. I won't fail to. [*Then to* ABUD.] We've been speaking of you.

ABUD. It was never any secret, sir.

GEORGE. Don't apologise.

Soon after this ABUD *passes out of sight.*

CARNABY. Nature's an encumbrance to us, Parson.

DR. REMNANT. One disapproves of flesh uninspired.

CARNABY. She allows you no amusing hobbies . . always takes you seriously.

GEORGE. Good-bye, Parson.

DR. REMNANT. [*As he bows.*] Your most obedient.

CARNABY. And you trifle with damnable democracy, with pretty theories of the respect due to womanhood, and now the result . . . hark to it squalling.

DR. REMNANT. Being fifty miles off might not one say: The cry of the new-born?

CARNABY. Ill-bred babies squall. There's no poetic glamour in the world will beautify an undesired infant. . . George says so.

GEORGE. I did say so.

CARNABY. I feel the whole matter deeply.

GEORGE *half laughs.*

CARNABY. George, after days of irritability, brought to bed of a smile. That's a home thrust of a metaphor.

GEORGE *laughs again.*

CARNABY. Twins!

GEORGE. Yes, a boy and a girl . . . I'm the father of a boy and a girl.

CARNABY. [*In dignified, indignant horror.*] No one of you dared tell me that much!

SARAH *and* ANN *come from the house.*

GEORGE. You could have asked me for news of your grandchildren.

CARNABY. Twins is an insult.

SARAH. But you look very cheerful, George.

GEORGE. I am content.

SARAH. I'm surprised.

GEORGE. I am surprised.

SARAH. Now what names for them?

CARNABY. No family names, please.

GEORGE. We'll wait for a dozen years or so, and let them choose their own.

DR. REMNANT. But, sir, christening will demand——

CARNABY. Your son should have had my name, sir.

GEORGE. I know the rule . . as I have my grandfather's, which I take no pride in.

SARAH. George!

GEORGE. Not to say that it sounds his, not mine.

CARNABY. Our hopes of you were high once.

GEORGE. Sarah, may I kiss you? [*He kisses her cheek.*] Let me hear what you decide to do.

CARNABY. The begetting of you, sir, was a waste of time.

GEORGE. [*Quite pleasantly.*] Don't say that.

At the top of the steps ANN *is waiting for him.*

GEORGE. Thank you, sister Ann.

GEORGE. Thank you, sister Ann.

ANN. Why didn't you leave us weeks ago?

GEORGE. Why?

They pace away, arm-in-arm.

CARNABY. [*Bitterly.*] Glad to go! Brighton, Sarah.

SARAH. No, I shall not come, Papa.

CARNABY. Coward. [*Then to* REMNANT.] Good-night.

DR. REMNANT. [*Covering the insolent dismissal.*] With your kind permission I will take my leave. [*Then he bows to* SARAH.] Lady Cottesham.

SARAH. [*Curtseying.*] Doctor Remnant, I am yours.

CARNABY. [*Sitting by the fountain, stamping his foot.*] Oh, this cracked earth! Will it rain . . will it rain?

DR. REMNANT. I doubt now. That cloud has passed.

CARNABY. Soft, pellucid rain! There's a good word, and I'm not at all sure what it means.

DR. REMNANT. Per . . lucere . . . letting light through.

REMNANT *leaves them.*

CARNABY. Solt, pellucid rain! . . thank you. Brighton. Sarah.

SARAH. Ann needs new clothes.

CARNABY. See to it.

SARAH. I shall not be there.

She turns from him.

CARNABY. Pretty climax to a quarrel!

SARAH. Not a quarrel.

CARNABY. A political difference.

SARAH. Don't look so ferocious.

CARNABY. My arm is in great pain and the wine's in my head.

SARAH. Won't you go to bed?

CARNABY. I'm well enough . . to travel. This marriage makes us safe, Sarah . . an anchor in each camp . . There's a mixed metaphor.

SARAH. If you'll have my advice, Papa, you'll keep those plans clear from Ann's mind.

CARNABY. John Carp is so much clay . . a man of forty ignorant of himself.

SARAH. But if the Duke will not . .

CARNABY. The Duke hates a scandal.

SARAH. Does he detest scandal?

CARNABY. The girl is well-bred and harmless . . why publicly quarrel with John and incense her old brute of a father? There's the Duke in a score of words. He'll take a little time to think it out so.

SARAH. And I say: Do you get on the right side of the Duke once again—that's what we've worked for—and leave these two alone.

CARNABY. Am I to lose my daughter?

SARAH. Papa . . your food's intrigue.

CARNABY. Scold at Society . . and what's the use?

SARAH. We're over-civilized.

ANN *rejoins them now. The twilight is gathering.*

CARNABY. My mother's very old . . . your grandfather's younger and seventy-nine . . he swears I'll never come into the title. There's little else.

SARAH. You're feverish . . why are you saying this?

CARNABY. Ann . . George . . George via Wycombe . . Wycombe Court . . Sir George Leete baronet, Justice of

the Peace, Deputy Lieutenant . . the thought's tumbled. Ann, I first saw your mother in this garden . . there.

ANN. Was she like me?

SARAH. My age when she married.

CARNABY. She was not beautiful . . then she died.

ANN. Mr. Tatton thinks it a romantic garden.

CARNABY. [*Pause.*] D'ye hear the wind sighing through that tree?

ANN. The air's quite still.

CARNABY. I hear myself sighing . . when I first saw your mother in this garden . . . that's how it was done.

SARAH. For a woman must marry.

CARNABY. [*Rises.*] You all take to it as ducks to water . . but apple sauce is quite correct . . I must not mix metaphors.

MRS. OPIE *comes from the house.*

SARAH. Your supper done, Mrs. Opie?

MRS. OPIE. I eat little in the evening.

SARAH. I believe that saves digestion.

MRS. OPIE. Ann, do you need me more to-night ?

ANN. Not any more.

MRS. OPIE. Ann, there is gossip among the servants about a wager . . .

ANN. Mrs. Opie, that was . . . yesterday.

MRS. OPIE. Ann, I should be glad to be able to contradict a reported . . embrace.

ANN. I was kissed.

MRS. OPIE. I am shocked.

CARNABY. Mrs. Opie, is it possible that all these years I have been nourishing a prude in my . . back drawing-room?

MRS. OPIE. I presume I am discharged of Ann's education; but as the salaried mistress of your household, Mr. Leete, I am grieved not to be able to deny such a rumour to your servants.

She sails back, righteously indignant.

CARNABY. Call out that you're marrying the wicked man . . comfort her.

SARAH. Mrs. Opie!

CARNABY. Consider that existence. An old maid . . so far as we know. Brevet rank . . missis. Not pleasant.

ANN. She wants nothing better . . at her age.

SARAH. How forgetful!

CARNABY. [*The force of the phrase growing.*] Brighton, Sarah.

SARAH. Now you've both read the love-letter which Tetgeen brought me.

CARNABY. Come to Brighton.

ANN. Come to Brighton, Sally.

SARAH. No. I have been thinking. I think I will accept the income, the house, coals, butter and eggs.

CARNABY. I give you a fortnight to bring your husband to his knees . . to your feet.

SARAH. I'm not sure that I could. My marriage has come naturally to an end.

CARNABY. Sarah, don't annoy me.

SARAH. Papa, you joined my bridegroom's political party . . now you see fit to leave it.

She glances at ANN, *who gives no sign, however.*

CARNABY. What have you been doing in ten years?

SARAH. Waiting for this to happen . . now I come to think.

CARNABY. Have ye the impudence to tell me that ye've never cared for your husband?

SARAH. I was caught by the first few kisses; but he . . .

CARNABY. Has he ever been unkind to you?

SARAH. Never. He's a gentleman through and through . . . quite charming to live with.

CARNABY. I see what more you expect. And he neither

drinks nor . . nor . . no one even could suppose your leaving him.

SARAH. No. I'm disgraced.

CARNABY. Fight for your honour.

SARAH. You surprise me sometimes by breaking out into cant phrases.

CARNABY. What is more useful in the world than honour?

SARAH. I think we never had any . . we!

CARNABY. Give me more details. Tell me, who is this man?

SARAH. I'm innocent . . if that were all.

ANN. Sally, what do they say you've done?

SARAH. I cry out like any poor girl.

CARNABY. There must be no doubt that you're innocent. Why not go for to force Charles into court?

SARAH. My innocence is not of the sort which shows up well.

CARNABY. Hold publicity in reserve. No fear of the two men arranging to meet, is there?

SARAH. They've met . . and they chatted about me.

CARNABY. [*After a moment.*] There's sound humour in that.

SARAH. I shall feel able to laugh at them both from Yorkshire.

CARNABY. God forbid! Come to Brighton . . we'll rally Charles no end.

SARAH. Papa, I know there's nothing to be done.

CARNABY. Coward!

SARAH. Besides, I don't think I want to go back to my happiness.

They are silent for a little.

CARNABY. How still! Look . . leaves falling already. Can that man hear what we're saying?

SARAH. [*To* ANN.] Can Abud overhear?

ANN. I've never talked secrets in the garden before to-day. [*Raising her voice but a very little.*] Can you hear me, Abud?

No reply comes.

CARNABY. Evidently not. There's brains shown in a trifle.

SARAH. Does your arm pain you so much?

ANN. Sarah, this man that you're fond of and that's not your husband is not by any chance Lord John Carp?

SARAH. No.

ANN. Nothing would surprise me.

SARAH. You are witty . . but a little young to be so hard.

CARNABY. Keep to your innocent thoughts.

ANN. I must study politics.

SARAH. We'll stop talking of this.

ANN. No . . let me listen . . quite quietly.

CARNABY. Let her listen . . she's going to be married.

SARAH. Good luck, Ann.

CARNABY. I have great hopes of Ann.

SARAH. I hope she may be heartless. To be heartless is to be quite safe.

CARNABY. Now we detect a taste of sour grapes in your mouth.

SARAH. Butter and eggs.

CARNABY. We must all start early in the morning. Sarah will take you, Ann, round the Brighton shops . . fine shops. You shall have the money . . .

SARAH. I will not come with you.

CARNABY. [*Vexedly.*] How absurd . . how ridiculous . . to persist in your silly sentiment.

SARAH. [*Her voice rising.*] I'm tired of that world . . which goes on and on, and there's no dying . . . one grows into a ghost . . visible . . then invisible. I'm glad

paint has gone out of fashion . . . the painted ghosts were very ill to see.

CARNABY. D'ye scoff at civilisation?

SARAH. Look ahead for me.

CARNABY. Banished to a hole in the damned provinces! But you're young yet, you're charming . . you're the wife . . and the honest wife of one of the country's best men. My head aches. D'ye despise good fortune's gifts? Keep as straight in your place in the world as you can. A monthly packet of books to Yorkshire . . no . . you never were fond of reading. Ye'd play patience .. cultivate chess problems . . kill yourself!

SARAH. When one world fails take another.

CARNABY. You have no more right to commit suicide than to desert the society you were born into. My head aches.

SARAH. George is happy.

CARNABY. D'ye dare to think so?

SARAH. No . . it's a horrible marriage.

CARNABY. He's losing refinement . . mark me . . he no longer polishes his nails.

SARAH. But there are the children now.

CARNABY. You never have wanted children.

SARAH. I don't want a little child.

CARNABY. She to be Lady Leete . . some day . . soon! What has he done for his family?

SARAH. I'll come with you. You are clever, Papa. And I know just what to say to Charles.

CARNABY. [*With a curious change of tone.*] If you study anatomy you'll find that the brain, as it works, pressing forward the eyes . . thought is painful. Never be defeated. Chapter the latest . . the tickling of the Carp. And my throat is dry . . shall I drink that water?

SARAH. No, I wouldn't.

CARNABY. Not out of my hand?

ANN. [*Speaking in a strange, quiet voice, after her long silence.*] I will not come to Brighton with you.

CARNABY. Very dry!

ANN. You must go back, Sally.

CARNABY. [*As he looks at her, standing stiffly.*] Now what is Ann's height . . five feet . . ?

ANN. Sally must go back, for she belongs to it . . but I'll stay here where I belong.

CARNABY. You've spoken three times, and the words are jumbling in at my ears meaninglessly. I certainly took too much wine at dinner . . or else . . . Yes . . Sally goes back . . and you'll go forward. Who stays here? Don't burlesque your sister. What's in the air . . what disease is this?

ANN. I mean to disobey you . . to stay here . . never to be unhappy.

CARNABY. So pleased!

ANN. I want to be an ordinary woman . . not clever . . not fortunate.

CARNABY. I can't hear.

ANN. Not clever. I don't believe in you, Papa.

CARNABY. I exist . . I'm very sorry.

ANN. I won't be married to any man. I refuse to be tempted . . I won't see him again.

CARNABY. Yes. It's raining.

SARAH. Raining!

CARNABY. Don't you stop it raining.

ANN. [*In the same level tones, to her sister now, who otherwise would turn, alarmed, to their father.*] And I curse you . . because, we being sisters, I suppose I am much what you were, about to be married; and I think, Sally, you'd have cursed your present self. I could become all that you are and more . . but I don't choose.

SARAH. Ann, what is to become of you?

CARNABY. Big drops . . big drops!

At this moment ABUD *is passing towards the house, his work finished.*

ANN. John Abud . . you mean to marry. When you marry . . will you marry me?

A blank silence, into which breaks CARNABY'S *sick voice.*

CARNABY. Take me indoors. I heard you ask the gardener to marry you.

ANN. I asked him.

CARNABY. I heard you say that you asked him. Take me in . . but not out of the rain.

ANN. Look .. he's straight-limbed and clear-eyed .. and I'm a woman.

SARAH. Ann, are you mad?

ANN. If we two were alone here in this garden, and everyone else in the world were dead . . what would you answer?

ABUD. [*Still amazed.*] Why . . yes.

CARNABY. Then that's settled . . pellucid.

He attempts to rise, but staggers backwards and forwards. SARAH *goes to him, alarmed.*

SARAH. Papa! . . there's no rain yet.

CARNABY. Hush, I'm dead.

ANN. [*Her nerves failing her.*] Oh . . oh . . oh . . !

SARAH. Abud, don't ever speak of this.

ABUD. No, my lady.

ANN. [*With a final effort.*] I mean it all. Wait three months.

CARNABY. Help me up steps . . son-in-law.

CARNABY *has started to grope his way indoors. But he reels and falls, helpless.*

ABUD. I'll carry him.

Throwing down his tools ABUD *lifts the frail sick man and carries him towards the house.* SARAH *follows.*

ANN. [*Sobbing a little and weary.*] Such a long day it has been . . now ending.

She follows too.

THE FOURTH ACT

The hall at Markswayde is square; in decoration strictly eighteenth century. The floor polished. Then comes six feet of soberly painted wainscot and above the greenish blue and yellowish green wall painted into panels. At intervals are low relief pilasters; the capitals of these are gilded. The ceiling is white and in the centre of it there is a frosted glass dome through which a dull light struggles. Two sides only of the hall are seen.

In the corner is a hat stand and on it are many cloaks and hats and beneath it several pairs of very muddy boots.

In the middle of the left hand wall are the double doors of the dining-room led up to by three or four stairs with balusters, and on either side standing against the wall long, formal, straight backed sofas.

In the middle of the right hand wall is the front door; glass double doors can be seen and there is evidently a porch beyond. On the left of the front door a small window. On the right a large fireplace, in which a large fire is roaring. Over the front door, a clock (the hands pointing to half-past one.) Over the fireplace a family portrait (temp. Queen Anne), below this a blunderbuss and several horse-pistols. Above the sofa full-length family portraits (temp. George I.) Before the front door a wooden screen, of lighter wood than the wainscot, and in the middle of it a small glass panel. Before this a heavy square table on which are whips and sticks, a hat or two and brushes; by the table a wooden chair. On

either side of the fire stand tall closed-in armchairs, and between the fireplace and the door a small red-baize screen.

When the dining-room doors are thrown open another wooden screen is to be seen.

There are a few rugs on the floor, formally arranged.

MRS. OPIE *stands in the middle of the hall, holding out a woman's brown cloak: she drops one side to fetch out her handkerchief and apply it to her eye.* DIMMUCK *comes in by the front door, which he carefully closes behind him. He is wrapped in a hooded cloak and carries a pair of boots and a newspaper. The boots he arranges to warm before the fire. Then he spreads the Chronicle newspaper upon the arm of a chair, then takes off his cloak and hangs it upon a peg close to the door.*

DIMMUCK. Mrs. Opie . . will you look to its not scorching?

MRS. OPIE *still mops her eyes.* DIMMUCK *goes towards the dining-room door, but turns.*

DIMMUCK. Will you kindly see that the *Chronicle* newspaper does not burn?

MRS. OPIE. I was crying.

DIMMUCK. I leave this to-morrow sennight . . thankful, ma'am, to have given notice in a dignified manner.

MRS. OPIE. I understand . . Those persons at table . .

DIMMUCK. You give notice.

MRS. OPIE. Mr. Dimmuck, this is my home.

LORD ARTHUR CARP *comes out of the dining-room. He is a thinner and more earnest-looking edition of his brother.* MRS. OPIE *turns a chair and hangs the cloak to warm before the fire, and then goes into the dining-room.*

LORD ARTHUR. My chaise round?

DIMMUCK. I've but just ordered it, my lord. Your lordship's man has give me your boots.

LORD ARTHUR. Does it snow?

DIMMUCK. Rather rain than snow.

LORD ARTHUR *takes up the newspaper.*

DIMMUCK. Yesterday's, my lord.

LORD ARTHUR. I've seen it. The mails don't hurry hereabouts. Can I be in London by the morning?

DIMMUCK. I should say you might be, my lord.

LORD ARTHUR *sits by the fire, while* DIMMUCK *takes off his pumps and starts to put on his boots.*

LORD ARTHUR. Is this a horse called "Ronald?"

DIMMUCK. Which horse, my lord?

LORD ARTHUR. Which I'm to take back with me . . my brother left here. I brought the mare he borrowed.

DIMMUCK. I remember, my lord. I'll enquire.

LORD ARTHUR. Tell Parker . .

DIMMUCK. Your lordship's man?

LORD ARTHUR. . . He'd better ride the beast.

SARAH *comes out of the dining-room. He stands up; one boot, one shoe.*

SARAH. Please put on the other.

LORD ARTHUR. Thank you . . I am in haste.

SARAH. To depart before the bride's departure?

LORD ARTHUR. Does the bride go with the bridegroom?

SARAH. She goes away.

LORD ARTHUR. I shall never see such a thing again.

SARAH. I think this entertainment is unique.

LORD ARTHUR. Any commissions in town?

SARAH. Why can't you stay to travel with us to-morrow and talk business to Papa by the way?

DIMMUCK *carrying the pumps and after putting on his cloak goes out through the front door. When it is closed, her voice changes.*

SARAH. Why . . Arthur?

He does not answer. Then MRS. OPIE *comes out of the dining-room to fetch the cloak. The two,*

with an effort, reconstruct their casual disjointed conversation.

SARAH. . . Before the bride's departure?

LORD ARTHUR. Does the bride go away with the bridegroom?

SARAH. She goes.

LORD ARTHUR. I shall never see such an entertainment again.

SARAH. We are quite unique.

LORD ARTHUR. Any commissions in town?

SARAH. Is she to go soon, too, Mrs. Opie?

MRS. OPIE. It is arranged they are to walk . . in this weather . . ten miles . . to the house.

SARAH. Cottage.

MRS. OPIE. Hut.

MRS. OPIE *takes the cloak into the dining-room. Then* SARAH *comes a little towards* LORD ARTHUR, *but waits for him to speak.*

LORD ARTHUR. [*A little awkwardly.*] You are not looking well.

SARAH. To our memory . . and beyond your little chat with my husband about me . . I want to speak an epitaph.

LORD ARTHUR. Charlie Cottesham behaved most honourably.

SARAH. And I think you did. Why have you not let me tell you so in your ear till now, to-day?

LORD ARTHUR. Sarah . . we had a narrow escape from . . .

SARAH. How's your wife?

LORD ARTHUR. Well . . thank you.

SARAH. Nervous, surely, at your travelling in winter?

LORD ARTHUR. I was so glad to receive a casual invitation from you and to come . . casually.

SARAH. Fifty miles.

LORD ARTHUR. Your father has been ill?

SARAH. Very ill through the autumn.

LORD ARTHUR. Do you think he suspects us?

SARAH. I shouldn't care to peep into Papa's innermost mind. You are to be very useful to him.

LORD ARTHUR. No.

SARAH. Then he'll go back to the government.

LORD ARTHUR. If he pleases . . if they please . . if you please.

SARAH. I am not going back to my husband. Arthur . . be useful to him.

LORD ARTHUR. No . . you are not coming to me. Always your father! [*After a moment.*] It was my little home in the country somehow said aloud you didn't care for me.

SARAH. I fooled you to small purpose.

LORD ARTHUR. I wish you had once made friends with my wife.

SARAH. If we . . this house I'm speaking of . . had made friends where we've only made tools and fools we shouldn't now be cursed as we are . . all. George, who is a cork, trying to sink socially. Ann is mad . . and a runaway.

LORD ARTHUR. Sarah, I've been devilish fond of you.

SARAH. Be useful to Papa. [*He shakes his head obstinately.*] Praise me a little. Haven't I worked my best for my family?

LORD ARTHUR. Suppose I could be useful to him now, would you, in spite of all, come to me . . no half measures?

SARAH. Arthur . . [*He makes a little passionate movement towards her, but she is cold.*] It's time for me to vanish from this world, because I've nothing left to sell.

LORD ARTHUR. I can't help him. I don't want you.

He turns away.

SARAH. I feel I've done my best.

LORD ARTHUR. Keep your father quiet.

SARAH. I mean to leave him.

LORD ARTHUR. What does he say to that?

SARAH. I've not yet told him.

LORD ARTHUR. What happens?

SARAH. To sell my jewels . . spoils of a ten years' war. Three thousand pound . . how much a year?

LORD ARTHUR. I'll buy them.

SARAH. And return them? You have almost the right to make such a suggestion.

LORD ARTHUR. Stick to your father. He'll care for you?

SARAH. No . . we all pride ourselves on our lack of sentiment.

LORD ARTHUR. You must take money from your husband.

SARAH. I have earned that and spent it.

LORD ARTHUR. [*Yielding once again to temptation.*] I'm devilish fond of you . . .

At that moment ABUD *comes out of the dining-room. He is dressed in his best.* SARAH *responds readily to the interruption.*

SARAH. And you must give my kindest compliments to Lady Arthur and my . . affectionately . . to the children, and I'll let Papa know that you're going.

LORD ARTHUR. Letters under cover to your father?

SARAH. Papa will stay in town through the session, of course . . but they all tell me that seventy-five pounds a year is a comfortable income in . . Timbuctoo.

She goes into the dining-room. ABUD *has selected his boots from the corner, and now stands with them in his hand, looking rather helpless. After a moment—*

LORD ARTHUR. I congratulate you, Mr. Abud.

ABUD. My lord . . I can't speak of myself.

CARNABY *comes out of the dining-room. He is evidently by no means recovered from his illness. He*

stands for a moment with an ironical eye on JOHN ABUD.

CARNABY. Son-in-law.

ABUD. I'm told to get on my boots, sir.

CARNABY. Allow me to assist you.

ABUD. I couldn't, sir.

CARNABY. Désolé!

Then he passes on. ABUD *sits on the sofa, furtively puts on his boots, and afterwards puts his shoes in his pockets.*

LORD ARTHUR. You were so busy drinking health to the two fat farmers that I wouldn't interrupt you.

CARNABY. Good-bye. Describe all this to your brother John.

LORD ARTHUR. So confirmed a bachelor!

CARNABY. Please say that we missed him.

LORD ARTHUR *hands him the newspaper.*

LORD ARTHUR. I've out-raced your *Chronicle* from London by some hours. There's a paragraph . . second column . . near the bottom.

CARNABY. [*Looking at it blindly.*] They print villainously now-a-days.

LORD ARTHUR. Inspired.

CARNABY. I trust his Grace is well?

LORD ARTHUR. Gouty.

CARNABY. Now doesn't the social aspect of this case interest you?

LORD ARTHUR. I object to feeding with the lower classes.

CARNABY. There's pride! How useful to note their simple manners! From the meeting of extremes new ideas spring . . new life.

LORD ARTHUR. Take that for a new social-political creed, Mr. Leete.

CARNABY. Do I lack one?

LORD ARTHUR. Please make my adieux to the bride.

CARNABY. Appropriate . . . 'à Dieu' . . she enters Nature's cloister. My epigram.

LORD ARTHUR. But . . good heavens . . are we to choose to be toiling animals?

CARNABY. To be such is my daughter's ambition.

LORD ARTHUR. You have not read that.

CARNABY. [*Giving back the paper, vexedly.*] I can't see.

LORD ARTHUR. "The Right Honourable Carnaby Leete is, we are glad to hear, completely recovered and will return to town for the opening of Session."

CARNABY. I mentioned it.

LORD ARTHUR. "We understand that although there has been no reconciliation with the Government it is quite untrue that this gentleman will in any way resume his connection with the Opposition."

CARNABY. Inspired?

LORD ARTHUR. I am here from my father to answer any questions.

CARNABY. [*With some dignity and the touch of a threat.*] Not now, my lord.

DIMMUCK *comes in at the front door.*

DIMMUCK. The chaise, my lord.

CARNABY. I will conduct you.

LORD ARTHUR. Please don't risk exposure.

CARNABY. Nay, I insist.

LORD ARTHUR. Health and happiness to you both, Mr. Abud.

LORD ARTHUR *goes out, followed by* CARNABY, *followed by* DIMMUCK. *At that moment* MR. SMALLPEICE *skips excitedly out of the dining-room. A ferret-like little lawyer.*

MR. SMALLPEICE. Oh . . where is Mr. Leete?

Not seeing him MR. SMALLPEICE *skips as excitedly back into the dining-room.* DIMMUCK *returns and*

hangs up his cloak then goes towards ABUD, *whom he surveys.*

DIMMUCK. Sir!

With which insult he starts for the dining-room reaching the door just in time to hold it open for SIR GEORGE LEETE *who comes out. He surveys* ABUD *for a moment, then explodes.*

SIR GEORGE LEETE. Damn you . . stand in the presence of your grandfather-in-law.

ABUD *stands up.* CARNABY *returns coughing, and* SIR GEORGE *looks him up and down.*

SIR GEORGE LEETE. I shall attend your funeral.

CARNABY. My daughter Sarah still needs me.

SIR GEORGE LEETE. I wonder at you, my son.

CARNABY. Have you any money to spare?

SIR GEORGE LEETE. No.

CARNABY. For Sarah, my housekeeper; I foresee a busy session.

ABUD *is now gingerly walking up the stairs.*

SIR GEORGE LEETE. Carnaby . . look at that.

CARNABY. Sound in wind and limb. Tread boldly, son-in-law.

ABUD *turns, stands awkwardly for a moment and then goes into the dining-room.*

SIR GEORGE LEETE. [*Relapsing into a pinch of snuff.*] I'm calm.

CARNABY. Regard this marriage with a wise eye . . as an amusing little episode.

SIR GEORGE LEETE. Do you?

CARNABY. And forget its oddity. Now that the humiliation is irrevocable, is it a personal grievance to you?

SIR GEORGE LEETE. Give me a dinner a day for the rest of my life and I'll be content.

CARNABY. Lately, one by one, opinions and desires have been failing me . . a flicker and then extinction.

I shall shortly attain to being a most able critic upon life.

SIR GEORGE LEETE. Shall I tell you again? You came into this world without a conscience. That explains you and it's all that does. That such a damnable coupling as this should be permitted by God Almighty . . or that the law shouldn't interfere! I've said my say.

MR. SMALLPEICE *again comes out of the dining-room.*

MR. SMALLPEICE. Mr. Leete.

CARNABY. [*Ironically polite.*] Mr. Shallpeice.

MR. SMALLPEICE. Mr. Crowe is proposing your health.

MR. CROWE *comes out. A crop-headed beefy-looking farmer of sixty.*

MR. CROWE. Was.

CARNABY. There's a good enemy!

MR. CROWE. Get out of my road . . lawyer Smallpeice.

CARNABY. Leave enough of him living to attend to my business.

MR. SMALLPEICE. [*Wriggling a bow at* CARNABY.] Oh . . dear sir!

SIR GEORGE LEETE. [*Disgustedly to* MR. SMALLPEICE.] You!

MR. SMALLPEICE. Employed in a small matter . . as yet.

CARNABY. [*To* CROWE.] I hope you spoke your mind of me.

MR. CROWE. Not behind your back, sir.

MRS. GEORGE LEETE *leads* LADY LEETE *from the dining-room.* LADY LEETE *is a very old, blind and decrepit woman.* DOLLY *is a buxom young mother; whose attire borders on the gaudy.*

CARNABY. [*With some tenderness.*] Well . . Mother . . dear?

MR. CROWE. [*Bumptiously to* SIR GEORGE LEETE.] Did my speech offend you, my lord?

SIR GEORGE LEETE. [*Sulkily.*] I'm a baronet.

LADY LEETE. Who's this here?

CARNABY. Carnaby.

DOLLY. Step down . . grandmother.

LADY LEETE. Who did ye say you were?

DOLLY. Mrs. George Leete.

LADY LEETE. Take me to the fire-side.

So CARNABY *and* DOLLY *lead her slowly to a chair by the fire where they carefully bestow her.*

MR. SMALLPEICE. [*To* FARMER CROWE.] He's leaving Markswayde, you know . . and me agent.

LADY LEETE. [*Suddenly bethinking her.*] Grace was not said. Fetch my chaplain . . at once.

MR. SMALLPEICE. I will run.

He runs into the dining-room.

DOLLY. [*Calling after with her country accent.*] Not parson Remnant . . t'other one.

LADY LEETE. [*Demanding.*] Snuff.

CARNABY. [*To his father.*] Sir . . my hand is a little unsteady.

SIR GEORGE *and* CARNABY *between them give* LADY LEETE *her snuff.*

MR. CROWE. Dolly . . ought those children to be left so long?

DOLLY. All right, father . . I have a maid.

LADY LEETE *sneezes.*

SIR GEORGE LEETE. She'll do that once too often altogether.

LADY LEETE. I'm cold.

DOLLY. I'm cold . . I lack my shawl.

CROWE. Call out to your man for it.

DOLLY. [*Going to the dining-room door.*] Will a gentleman please ask Mr. George Leete for my Cache-y-mire shawl?

MR. CROWE. [*To* CARNABY.] And I drank to the health of our grandson.

CARNABY. Now suppose George were to assume your name, Mr. Crowe?

MR. TOZER *comes out of the dining-room. Of the worst type of eighteenth century parson, for which one may see Hogarth's 'Harlot's Progress.' He is very drunk.*

SIR GEORGE LEETE. [*In his wife's ear.*] Tozer!

LADY LEETE. When . . why!

SIR GEORGE LEETE. To say grace.

LADY LEETE *folds her withered hands.*

MR. TOZER. [*Through his hiccoughs.*] Damn you all.

LADY LEETE. [*Reverently, thinking it is said.*] Amen.

MR. TOZER. Only my joke.

CARNABY. [*Rising to the height of the occasion.*] Mr. Tozer, I am indeed glad to see you, upon this occasion, so delightfully drunk.

MR. TOZER. Always a gen'elman . . by nature.

SIR GEORGE LEETE. Lie down . . you dog.

GEORGE *comes out carrying the cashmere shawl.*

GEORGE. [*To his father.*] Dolly wants her father to rent Markswayde, sir.

MR. CROWE. Not me, my son. You're to be a farmer-baronet.

SIR GEORGE. Curse your impudence!

CARNABY. My one regret in dying would be to miss seeing him so.

GEORGE *goes back into the dining-room.*

MR. CROWE. I am tickled to think that the man marrying your daughter wasn't good enough for mine.

CARNABY. And yet at fisticuffs I'd back John Abud against our son George.

DR. REMNANT *has come out of the dining-room.* TOZER *has stumbled towards him and is wagging an argumentative finger.*

MR. TOZER. . . Marriage means enjoyment!

DR. REMNANT. [*Controlling his indignation.*] I repeat that I have found in my own copy of the prayer book no insistence upon a romantic passion.

MR. TOZER. My 'terpretation of God's word is 'bove criticism.

MR. TOZER reaches the door and falls into the dining-room.

CARNABY. [*Weakly to* DR. REMNANT.] Give me your arm for a moment.

DR. REMNANT. I think Lady Cottesham has Mrs. John Abud prepared to start, sir.

CARNABY. I trust Ann will take no chill walking through the mud.

DR. REMNANT. Won't you sit down, sir?

CARNABY. No.

For some moments CROWE *has been staring indignantly at* SIR GEORGE. *Now he breaks out.*

MR. CROWE. The front door of this mansion is opened to a common gardener and only then to me and mine!

SIR GEORGE LEETE. [*Virulently.*] Damn you and yours and damn them . . and damn you again for the worse disgrace.

MR. CROWE. Damn *you*, sir . . have you paid him to marry the girl?

He turns away, purple faced, and SIR GEORGE *chokes impotently.* ABUD *and* MR. PRESTIGE *come out talking. He is younger and less assertive than* FARMER CROWE.

MR. PRESTIGE. [*Pathetically.*] All our family always has got drunk at weddings.

ABUD. [*In remonstrance.*] Please, uncle.

CARNABY. Mr. Crowe . . I have been much to blame for not seeking you sooner.

MR. CROWE. [*Mollified.*] Shake hands.

CARNABY. [*Offering his with some difficulty.*] My arm

is stiff . . from an accident. This is a maid's marriage, I assure you.

MR. PRESTIGE. [*Open mouthed to* DR. REMNANT.] One could hang bacon here!

DOLLY. [*Very high and mighty.*] The family don't.

CARNABY. [*To his father.*] And won't you apologise for your remarks to Mr. Crowe, sir?

LADY LEETE. [*Demanding.*] Snuff!

CARNABY. And your box to my mother, sir.

SIR GEORGE *attends to his wife.*

DOLLY. [*Anxiously to* DR. REMNANT.] Can a gentleman change his name?

MR. CROWE. Parson . . once noble always noble, I take it.

DR. REMNANT. Certainly . . but I hope you have money to leave them, Mr. Crowe.

DOLLY. [*To* ABUD.] John.

ABUD. Dorothy.

DOLLY. You've not seen my babies yet.

LADY LEETE *sneezes.*

SIR GEORGE LEETE. Carnaby . . d'ye intend to murder that Crowe fellow . . or must I?

MR. SMALLPEICE *skips from the dining-room.*

MR. SMALLPEICE. Mr. John Abud . .

MR. CROWE. [*To* DR. REMNANT *as he nods towards* CARNABY.] Don't tell me he's got over that fever yet.

MR. SMALLPEICE. . . The ladies say . . are you ready or are you not?

MR. PRESTIGE. I'll get thy cloak, John.

MR. PRESTIGE *goes for the cloak.* CARNABY *has taken a pistol from the mantel-piece and now points it at* ABUD.

CARNABY. He's fit for heaven!

GEORGE LEETE *comes from the dining-room, and, noticing his father's action, says sharply . .*

GEORGE. I suppose you know that pistol's loaded.

Which calls everyone's attention. DOLLY *shrieks.*

CARNABY. What if there had been an accident!

And he puts back the pistol. ABUD *takes his cloak from* PRESTIGE.

ABUD. Thank you, uncle.

MR. PRESTIGE. I'm a proud man, Mr. Crowe . .

CARNABY. Pride!

GEORGE. [*Has a sudden inspiration, and strides up to* ABUD.] Here ends the joke, my good fellow. Be off without your wife.

ABUD *stares, as do the others. Only* CARNABY *suddenly catches* REMNANT'S *arm.*

MR. PRESTIGE. [*Solemnly.*] But it's illegal to separate them.

GEORGE. [*Giving up.*] Mr. Prestige . . you are the backbone of England.

CARNABY. [*To* REMNANT.] Where are your miracles?

MRS. PRESTIGE *comes out. A motherly farmer's wife, a mountain of a woman.*

MRS. PRESTIGE. John . . kiss your aunt.

ABUD *goes to her, and she obliterates him in an embrace.*

GEORGE. [*To his father.*] Sense of humour . . Sense of humour!

LADY LEETE. Snuff.

But no one heeds her this time.

CARNABY. It doesn't matter.

GEORGE. Smile. Let's be helpless gracefully.

CARNABY. There are moments when I'm not sure——

GEORGE. It's her own life.

TOZER *staggers from the dining-room drunker than ever. He falls against the baluster and waves his* arms.

MR. TOZER. Silence there for the corpse!

MR. CROWE. You beast!

MR. TOZER. Respect my cloth . . Mr. Prestige.

MR. CROWE. That's not my name.

MR. TOZER. I'll have you to know that I'm Sir George Leete's baronet's most boon companion and her la'ship never goes nowhere without me. [*He subsides into a chair.*]

LADY LEETE. [*Tearfully.*] Snuff.

From the dining-room comes ANN; *her head bent. She is crossing the hall when* SARAH *follows, calling her.*

SARAH. Ann!

ANN *turns back to kiss her. The rest of the company stand gazing.* SIR GEORGE *gives snuff to* LADY LEETE.

ANN. Good bye, Sally.

SARAH. [*In a whisper.*] Forget us.

GEORGE. [*Relieving his feelings.*] Good-bye, everybody . . good-bye, everything.

ABUD *goes to the front door and opening it stands waiting for her. She goes coldly but timidly to her father, to whom she puts her face up to be kissed.*

ANN. Good-bye, Papa.

CARNABY. [*Quietly, as he kisses her cheek.*] I can do without you.

SIR GEORGE LEETE. [*Raging at the draught.*] Shut that door.

ANN. I'm gone.

She goes with her husband. MRS. OPIE *comes hurriedly out of the dining-room, too late.*

MRS. OPIE. Oh!

DR. REMNANT. Run . . Mrs. Opie.

CARNABY. There has started the new century!

MRS. OPIE *opens the front door to look after them.*

SIR GEORGE LEETE. [*With double energy.*] Shut that door.

LADY LEETE *sneezes and then chokes. There is much commotion in her neighbourhood.*

SIR GEORGE. Now she's hurt again.

DOLLY. Water!

MR. CROWE. Brandy!

SARAH. [*Going.*] I'll fetch both.

GEORGE. We must all die . . some day.

MR. TOZER. [*Who has struggled up to see what is the matter.*] And go to——

DR. REMNANT. Hell. You do believe in that, Mr. Tozer.

MRS. OPIE. [*Fanning the poor old lady.*] She's better.

CARNABY. [*To his guests.*] Gentlemen . . punch.

PRESTIGE *and* SMALLPEICE; MRS. PRESTIGE, GEORGE *and* DOLLY *move towards the dining-room.*

MR. PRESTIGE. [*To* SMALLPEICE.] You owe all this to me.

MR. CROWE. Dolly . . I'm going.

MRS. PRESTIGE. [*To her husband as she nods towards* CARNABY.] Nathaniel . . look at 'im.

GEORGE. [*To his father-in-law.*] Must we come too?

MRS. PRESTIGE. [*As before.*] I can't help it . . a sneerin' carpin' cavillin' devil!

MRS. OPIE. Markswayde is to let . . as I hear . . Mr. Leete?

CARNABY. Markswayde is to let.

He goes on his way to the dining-room meeting SARAH *who comes out carrying a glass of water and a decanter of brandy.* SIR GEORGE LEETE *is comfortably warming himself at the fire.*

* * * * * * * * * * * * *

The living room of JOHN ABUD'S *new cottage has bare plaster walls and its ceilings and floor are of red*

brick; all fresh looking but not new. In the middle of the middle wall there is a latticed window, dimity curtained; upon the plain shelf in front are several flower-pots.

To the right of this, a door, cross beamed and with a large lock to it besides the latch.

Against the right hand wall, is a dresser, furnished with dishes and plates: below it is a common looking grandfather clock; below this a small door which when opened shows winding stairs leading to the room above. In the left hand wall there is a door which is almost hidden by the fireplace which juts out below it. In the fireplace a wood fire is laid but not lit. At right angles to this stands a heavy oak settle opposite a plain deal table; just beyond which is a little bench. On either side of the window is a Windsor armchair. Between the window and the door hangs a framed sampler.

In the darkness the sound of the unlocking of a door and of ABUD *entering is heard. He walks to the table, strikes a light upon a tinder-box and lights a candle which he finds there.* ANN *is standing in the doorway.* ABUD *is in stocking feet.*

ABUD. Don't come further. Here are your slippers.

He places one of the Windsor chairs for her on which she sits while he takes off her wet shoes and puts on her slippers which he found on the table. Then he takes her wet shoes to the fireplace. She sits still. Then he goes to the door and brings in his own boots from the little porch and puts them in the fireplace too. Then he locks the door and hangs up the key beside it. Then he stands looking at her; but she does not speak, so he takes the candle, lifts it above his head and walks to the dresser.

ABUD. [*Encouragingly.*] Our dresser . . Thomas Jupp

made that. Plates and dishes. Here's Uncle Prestige's clock.

ANN. Past seven.

ABUD. That's upstairs. Table and bench, deal. Oak settle . . solid.

ANN. Charming.

ABUD. Windsor chairs . . Mother's sampler.

ANN. Home.

ABUD. Is it as you wish? I have been glad at your not seeing it until to-night.

ANN. I'm sinking into the strangeness of the place.

ABUD. Very weary? It's been a long nine miles.

She does not answer. He goes and considers the flower-pots in the window.

ANN. I still have on my cloak.

ABUD. Hang it behind the door there . . no matter if the wet drips.

ANN. I can wipe up the puddle.

She hangs up her cloak. He selects a flower-pot and brings it to her.

ABUD. Hyacinth bulbs for the spring.

ANN. [*After a glance.*] I don't want to hold them.

He puts back the pot, a little disappointed.

ABUD. Out there's the scullery.

ANN. It's very cold.

ABUD. If we light the fire now that means more trouble in the morning.

She sits on the settle.

ANN. Yes, I am very weary.

ABUD. Go to bed.

ABUD. Not yet. [*After a moment.*] How much light one candle gives! Sit where I may see you.

He sits on the bench. She studies him curiously.

ANN. Well . . this is an experiment.

ABUD. [*With reverence.*] God help us both.

ANN. Amen. Some people are so careful of their lives. If we fail miserably we'll hold our tongues . . won't we?

ABUD. I don't know . . I can't speak of this.

ANN. These impossible things which are done mustn't be talked of . . that spoils them. We don't want to boast of this, do we?

ABUD. I fancy nobody quite believes that we are married.

ANN. Here's my ring . . real gold.

ABUD. [*With a sudden fierce throw up of his head.*] Never you remind me of the difference between us.

ANN. Don't speak to me so.

ABUD. Now I'm your better.

ANN. My master . . The door's locked.

ABUD. [*Nodding.*] I know that I must be . . or be a fool.

ANN. [*After a moment.*] Be kind to me.

ABUD. [*With remorse.*] Always I will.

ANN. You are master here.

ABUD. And I've angered you?

ANN. And if I fail . . I'll never tell you . . to make a fool of you. And you're trembling. [*She sees his hand, which is on the table, shake.*]

ABUD. Look at that now.

ANN. [*Lifting her own.*] My white hands must redden. No more dainty appetite . . no more pretty books.

ABUD. Have you learned to scrub?

ANN. Not this floor.

ABUD. Mother always did bricks with a mop. Tomorrow I go to work. You'll be left for all day.

ANN. I must make friends with the other women around.

ABUD. My friends are very curious about you.

ANN. I'll wait to begin till I'm seasoned.

ABUD. Four o'clock's the hour for getting up.

ANN. Early rising always was a vice of mine.

ABUD. Breakfast quickly . . . and I take my dinner with me.

ANN. In a handkerchief.

ABUD. Hot supper, please.

ANN. It shall be ready for you.

There is silence between them for a little. Then he says timidly.

ABUD. May I come near to you?

ANN. [*In a low voice.*] Come.

He sits beside her, gazing.

ABUD. Wife . . I never have kissed you.

ANN. Shut your eyes.

ABUD. Are you afraid of me?

ANN. We're not to play such games at love.

ABUD. I can't help wanting to feel very tender towards you.

ANN. Think of me . . not as a wife . . but as a mother of your children . . if it's to be so. Treat me so.

ABUD. You are a part of me.

ANN. We must try and understand it . . as a simple thing.

ABUD. But shall I kiss you?

ANN. [*Lowering her head.*] Kiss me.

But when he puts his arms round her she shrinks.

ANN. No.

ABUD. But I will. It's my right.

Almost by force he kisses her. Afterwards she clenches her hands, and seems to suffer.

ABUD. Have I hurt you?

She gives him her hand, with a strange little smile.

ANN. I forgive you.

ABUD. [*Encouraged.*] Ann . . we're beginning life together.

ANN. Remember . . work's enough . . no stopping to talk.

ABUD. I'll work for you.

ANN. I'll do my part . something will come of it.

For a moment they . . ogether hand in hand. Then she leaves him and paces across the room. There is a slight pause.

ANN. Papa . . I said . . we've all been in too great a hurry getting civilised. False dawn. I mean to go back.

ABUD. He laughed.

ANN. So he saw I was of no use to him, and he's penniless, and he let me go. When my father dies what will he take with him? . . . for you do take your works with you into Heaven or Hell, I believe. Much wit. Sally is afraid to die. (Don't you aspire like George's wife.) I was afraid to live . . and now . . I am content.

She walks slowly to the window, and from there to the door, against which she places her ear. Then she looks round at her husband.

ANN. I can hear them chattering.

Then she goes to the little door and opens it. ABUD *takes up the candle.*

ABUD. I'll hold the light . . the stairs are steep.

He lights her up the stairs.

"The Marrying of Ann Leete" was produced by the Stage Society, at the Royalty Theatre, on the evening of January 26th, 1902.

Ann Leete	*Miss Winifred Fraser*
Lord John Carp	*Julian Royce*
George Leete	*Kenneth Douglas*
Mr. Daniel Tatton	*J. Malcolm Dunn*
Lady Cottesham	*Miss Henrietta Watson*
Carnaby Leete	*H. A. Saintsbury*
John Abud	*C. M. Hallard*
The Rev. Dr. Remnant	*Howard Sturge*
Mrs. Opie	*Miss Helen Rous*
Dimmuck	*George Trollope*
Mr. Tetgeen	*A. E. George*
Lord Arthur Carp	*Charles V. France*
Mr. Smallpeice	*J. Y. F. Cooke*
Sir George Leete	*Arthur Grenville*
Mr. Crowe	*Sydney Paxton*
Lady Leete	*Miss Bessie Page*
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